

Syrian War-Islamic State (ISIS) Creation Timeline

By Kevin Borge
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This document is meant for all those interested in the lead up and current events surrounding the war in Syria and the creation of the Islamic State (ISIS).

Below is a timeline ranging from 1992-2015 with related articles to the war in Syria, ISIS and geopolitical events that tie them all together. Purposely the author of this document provides No commentary.

You will notice that each citation is met with origin of the article, date published and key quotations. Also, the author attempted to find sources that many “Westerners” would consider “mainstream”, with the exception of a few. Lastly, at the end of the timeline, one can find longer articles and videos that the reader can dive into if interested.

-Kevin Borge

SYRIAN WAR-ISIS CREATION TIMELINE:

History Commons, Autumn 1992:

<http://www.historycommons.org/context.jsp?item=aautumn92rethinking#aautumn92rethinking>

– “Princeton University professor Bernard Lewis publishes an article in the influential journal Foreign Affairs called “Rethinking the Middle East.” In it, he advocates a policy he calls “Lebanonization.” He says, “[A] possibility, which could even be precipitated by [Islamic] fundamentalism, is what has late been fashionable to call ‘Lebanonization.’”... Lewis, a British Jew, is well known as a longtime supporter of the Israeli right wing. Since the 1950s, he has argued that the West and Islam have been engaged in a titanic “clash of civilizations” and that the US should take a hard line against all Arab countries. Lewis is considered a highly influential figure to the neoconservative movement, and some neoconservatives such as **Richard Perle** (right) and Harold Rhode consider him a mentor. In 1996, Perle and others influenced by Lewis will write a paper for right wing Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu entitled “A Clean Break” that advocates the “Lebanonization” of countries like Iraq and Syria.”... “Lewis will remain influential after 9/11. For instance, he will have dinner with Vice President Cheney shortly before the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Some will later suspect that Cheney and others were actually implementing Lewis’s idea by invading Iraq. Chas Freeman, former US ambassador to Saudi Arabia, will say in May 2003, just after the invasion, “The neoconservatives’ intention in Iraq was never to truly build democracy there. Their intention was to flatten it, to remove Iraq as a regional threat to Israel.”

History Commons, July 8, 1996:

http://www.historycommons.org/context.jsp?item=complete_timeline_of_the_2003_invasion_of_iraq_74#complete_timeline_of_the_2003_invasion_of_iraq_74

“The Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, an Israeli think tank, publishes a paper titled “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm.” The paper, whose lead author is neoconservative Richard Perle, is meant to advise the new, right-wing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.”... It advocates making a complete break with past policies by adopting a strategy “based on an entirely new intellectual foundation, one that restores strategic initiative and provides the nation the room to engage every possible energy on rebuilding Zionism....”...

“Much along the lines of an earlier paper by Israeli Oded Yinon the document urges the Israelis to aggressively seek the downfall of their Arab neighbors—especially Syria and Iraq—by exploiting the inherent tensions within and among the Arab States. The first step is to be the removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. A war with Iraq will destabilize the entire Middle East, allowing governments in Syria, Iran, Lebanon, and other countries to be replaced. “Israel will not only contain its foes; it will transcend them,” the paper says.”

Weekly Standard, September 24, 2001:

<http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/000/025ocenr.asp>

- “Defeating the Saddam/bin Laden axis will send a broader message as well. It will deter Iran, Syria, and the other part-time members of the anti-American coalition in the Middle East, and reassure our regional friends. And it will restore the global credibility tarnished in the Clinton years. Both our friends and our enemies will be watching to see if we pass this test.”

History Commons, September 28, 2001:

<http://www.historycommons.org/context.jsp?item=a092801probablywasbehind#a092801probablywasbehind>

– “During a National Security Council meeting attended by **CIA Director Tenet** (left with Bush and Cheney), National Security Adviser Rice, Secretary of State Powell, Vice President Cheney and others, President Bush says of the 9/11 attacks, “Many believe Saddam [Hussein] is involved. That’s not an issue for now. If we catch him being involved, we’ll act. He probably was behind this in the end.” He also says, “What we do in Afghanistan is an important part of our effort. It’s important to be serious and that’ll be a signal to other countries about how serious we are on terror.” He mentions Syria and Iran as countries he wants to warn. This is according to journalist Bob Woodward, who interviews many top officials at the meeting.”

Foreign Policy Research Institute, November 14, 2001:

<http://www.fpri.org/articles/2001/11/next-stop-iraq> -

“Those who think Iraq should not be next may want to think about Syria or Iran or Sudan or Yemen or Somalia or North Korea or Lebanon or the Palestinian Authority. These are all institutions, governments for the most part, that permit acts of terror to take place, that sponsor terrorists, that give them refuge, give them sanctuary, and very often much more help than that. When I recite this list, people typically say “Well, are we going to go to war against a dozen countries?”... “If we destroy the Taliban in Afghanistan, and I’m confident we will, and we then go on to destroy the regime of Saddam Hussein, and we certainly could if we chose to do so, I think we would have an impressive case to make to the Syrians, the Somalis and others. We could deliver a short message, a two-word message: “You’re next. You’re next unless you stop the practice of supporting terrorism.”

CBS News, January 29, 2002:

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-war-on-waste/>

- “”According to some estimates we cannot track \$2.3 trillion in transactions,” Rumsfeld admitted. \$2.3 trillion — that’s \$8,000 for every man, woman and child in America. To understand how the Pentagon can lose track of trillions, consider the case of one military accountant who tried to find out what happened to a mere \$300 million.”...

Christian Science Monitor, August 30, 2002:

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0830/p08s01-wome.html>

- “It echoes the hawks in the Bush administration, but Israel has its own agenda in backing a US attack on Iraq. As Egypt and other Arab allies issue vehement warnings to dissuade Washington, Israel’s fear is that the US will back off.”... “Yuval Steinitz, a Likud party member of the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, says he sees another advantage for Israel. The installation of a pro-American government in Iraq would help Israel vis-à-vis another enemy: Syria. “After Iraq is taken by US troops and we see a new regime installed as in Afghanistan, and Iraqi bases become American bases, it will be very easy to pressure Syria to stop supporting terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad, to allow the Lebanese army to dismantle Hezbollah, and maybe to put an end to the Syrian occupation in Lebanon,” he says. “If this happens we will really see a new Middle East.” “It might be enough not to invade Syria but just to have an American or UN blockade so that no one can ship weapons to it,” Steinitz adds.”

The Guardian, September 3, 2002:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/03/worlddispatch.iraq>

- “In a televised speech last week, President Hosni Mubarak (left) of Egypt predicted devastating consequences for the Middle East if Iraq is attacked. “We fear a state of disorder and chaos may prevail in the region,” he said. Mr Mubarak is an old-fashioned kind of Arab leader and, in the brave new post-September-11 world, he doesn’t quite get the point.”... “For the hawks, disorder and chaos sweeping through the region would not be an unfortunate side-effect of war with Iraq, but a sign that everything is going according to plan. In their eyes, Iraq is just the starting point – or, as a recent presentation at the Pentagon put it, “the tactical pivot” – for re-moulding the Middle East on Israeli-American lines.”...

“The “skittles theory” of the Middle East – that one ball aimed at Iraq can knock down several regimes – has been around for some time on the wilder fringes of politics but has come to the fore in the United States on the back of the “war against terrorism”. Its roots can be traced, at least in part, to a paper published in 1996 by an Israeli think tank, the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies. Entitled “A clean break: a new strategy for securing the realm”, it was intended as a political blueprint for the incoming government of Binyamin Netanyahu. As the title indicates, it advised the right-wing Mr Netanyahu to make a complete break with the past by adopting a strategy “based on an entirely new intellectual foundation, one that restores strategic initiative and provides the nation the room to engage every possible energy on rebuilding Zionism ...”...

“The paper set out a plan by which Israel would “shape its strategic environment”, beginning with the removal of Saddam Hussein and the installation of a Hashemite monarchy in Baghdad. With Saddam out of the way and Iraq thus brought under Jordanian Hashemite influence, Jordan and Turkey would form an axis along with Israel to weaken and “roll back” Syria.”... “To succeed, the paper stressed, Israel would have to win broad American support for these new policies – and it advised Mr Netanyahu to formulate them “in language familiar to the Americans by tapping into themes of American administrations during the cold war which apply well to Israel”.”

Haaretz, February 18, 2003:

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/sharon-says-u-s-should-also-disarm-iran-libya-and-syria-1.18707>

- “Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said yesterday that Iran, Libya and Syria should be stripped of weapons of mass destruction after Iraq. “These are irresponsible states, which must be disarmed of weapons mass destruction, and a successful American move in Iraq as a model will make that easier to achieve,” Sharon said to a visiting delegation of American congressmen.”

The American Conservative, March 24, 2003:

<http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/whose-war/>

- “In a rare moment in U.S. journalism, Tim Russert put this question directly to Richard Perle: “Can you assure American viewers ... that we’re in this situation against Saddam Hussein and his removal for American security interests? And what would be the link in terms of Israel?” Suddenly, the Israeli connection is on the table, and the War Party is not amused.”... “What Kaplan, Brooks, Boot, and Kagan are doing is what the Rev. Jesse Jackson does when caught with some mammoth contribution from a Fortune 500 company he has lately accused of discriminating. He plays the race card.

Neocons Planned Regime Change in the Middle East and North Africa 20 Years Ago

So, too, the neoconservatives are trying to fend off critics by assassinating their character and impugning their motives. Indeed, it is the charge of “anti-Semitism” itself that is toxic. For this venerable slander is designed to nullify public discourse by smearing and intimidating foes and censoring and blacklisting them and any who would publish them. Neocons say we attack them because they are Jewish. We do not. We attack them because their warmongering threatens our country, even as it finds a reliable echo in Ariel Sharon.”...

“On Sept. 12, Americans were still in shock when Bill Bennett told CNN that we were in “a struggle between good and evil,” that the Congress must declare war on “militant Islam,” and that “overwhelming force” must be used. Bennett cited Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and China as targets for attack.”...

“The Wall Street Journal immediately offered up a specific target list, calling for U.S. air strikes on “terrorist camps in Syria, Sudan, Libya, and Algeria, and perhaps even in parts of Egypt.” Yet, not one of Bennett’s six countries, nor one of these five, had anything to do with 9/11.”... “On Sept. 20, forty neoconservatives sent an open letter to the White House instructing President Bush on how the war on terror must be conducted. Signed by Bennett, Podhoretz, Kirkpatrick, Perle, Kristol, and Washington Post columnist Charles Krauthammer, the letter was an ultimatum. To retain the signers’ support, the president was told, he must target Hezbollah for destruction, retaliate against Syria and Iran if they refuse to sever ties to Hezbollah, and overthrow Saddam.”... “Indeed, Sharon has been everywhere the echo of his acolytes in America. In February 2003, Sharon told a delegation of Congressmen that, after Saddam’s regime is destroyed, it is of “vital importance” that the United States disarm Iran, Syria, and Libya.”... “In 1996, with Douglas Feith and David Wurmser, Perle wrote “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm,” for Prime Minister Netanyahu.

In it, Perle, Feith, and Wurmser urged Bibi to ditch the Oslo Accords of the assassinated Yitzak Rabin and adopt a new aggressive strategy: *Israel can shape its strategic environment, in cooperation with Turkey and Jordan, by weakening, containing, and even rolling back Syria. This effort can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq—an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right—as a means of foiling Syria’s regional ambitions. Jordan has challenged Syria’s regional ambitions recently by suggesting the restoration of the Hashemites in Iraq.* In the Perle-Feith-Wurmser strategy, Israel’s enemy remains Syria, but the road to Damascus runs through Baghdad. Their plan, which urged Israel to re-establish “the principle of preemption,” has now been imposed by Perle, Feith, Wurmser & Co. on the United States.”... “U.S. Undersecretary of State John Bolton said in meetings with Israeli officials ... that he has no doubt America will attack Iraq and that it will be necessary to deal with threats from Syria, Iran and North Korea afterwards.”

The Telegraph, April 21, 2003:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/1428064/America-plans-military-bases-in-Iraq-to-apply-pressure-on-Middle-East.html>

- “The United States is planning to establish up to four long-term military bases in Iraq. The proposal would transform America’s ability to project its power in the Middle East.”... “The bases would be used primarily to help with reconstructing Iraq. But their proximity to Syria and Iran could help the US to apply added pressure on those countries. With US troops also stationed in Afghanistan, Iran is now almost surrounded by American forces. One senior official said US bases in Iraq would “make Syria and Iran nervous”.”

USA Today, May 1, 2003:

http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/editorials/2003-05-01-oppose_x.htm

- “Iran, Syria, North Korea, Libya, these and other nations are relentless in their pursuit of terror weapons. Does anyone seriously argue that they would abandon their programs if we had left Saddam in power?”

The Guardian, September 26, 2003:

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/sep/27/uk.syria1?cat=politics&type=article>

- “Nearly 50 years before the war in Iraq, Britain and America sought a secretive “regime change” in another Arab country they accused of spreading terror and threatening the west’s oil supplies, by planning the invasion of Syria and the assassination of leading figures. Newly discovered documents show how in 1957 Harold Macmillan and President Dwight Eisenhower approved a CIA-MI6 plan to stage fake border incidents as an excuse for an invasion by Syria’s pro-western neighbours, and then to “eliminate” the most influential triumvirate in Damascus.”... “More importantly, Syria also had control of one of the main oil arteries of the Middle East, the pipeline which connected pro-western Iraq’s oilfields to Turkey.”...

“The report said that once the necessary degree of fear had been created, frontier incidents and border clashes would be staged to provide a pretext for Iraqi and Jordanian military intervention. Syria had to be “made to appear as the sponsor of plots, sabotage and violence directed against neighbouring governments,” the report says. “CIA and SIS should use their capabilities in both the psychological and action fields to augment tension.” That meant operations in Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon, taking the form of “sabotage, national conspiracies and various strong-arm activities” to be blamed on

Damascus. The plan called for funding of a “Free Syria Committee”, and the arming of “political factions with paramilitary or other actionist capabilities” within Syria”

The Independent, December 24, 2004:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraqs-christian-minority-loses-its-innocence-now-the-rule-of-saddam-is-over-6155429.html>

- “After decades of living in relative harmony with the Muslim majority, Iraq’s ancient Christian minority who include Chaldeans, with allegiance to the Pope, as well as Orthodox Assyrians and Armenians is threatened as never before.”...

History Commons, January 25, 2005:

<http://www.historycommons.org/context.jsp?item=us%20plans%20to%20use%20military%20force%20against%20iran%20905#us%20plans%20to%20use%20military%20force%20against%20iran%20905>

- “Military analyst William Arkin publishes 3,000 US military code names along with brief descriptions in his book Code Names: Deciphering US Military Plans, Programs, and Operations in the 9/11 World. Included in his list is CONPLAN 8022, a top-secret pre-emptive plan to take out nuclear facilities and other threats in Iran, Syria, and North Korea. Another plan mentioned is Oplan 4305, which is a contingency plan for defending of Israel.”

Asia Times, February 15, 2005:

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/GB15Ak02.html

- “Asia Times Online has learned that in a highly clandestine operation, the US has procured Pakistan-manufactured weapons, including rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, ammunition, rockets and other light weaponry. Consignments have been loaded in bulk onto US military cargo aircraft at Chaklala airbase in the past few weeks. The aircraft arrived from and departed for Iraq. The US-armed and supported militias in the south will comprise former members of the Ba’ath Party, which has already split into three factions, only one of which is pro-Saddam Hussein.

They would be expected to receive assistance from pro-US interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi’s Iraqi National Accord. A military analyst familiar with strategic and proxy operations commented that there is a specific reason behind procuring arms from Pakistan, rather than acquiring US-made ones. “A similar strategy was adopted in Afghanistan during the initial few years of the anti-USSR resistance [the early 1980s] movement where guerrillas were supplied with Chinese-made AK-47 rifles [which were procured by Pakistan with US money], Egyptian and German-made G-3 rifles. Similarly, other arms, like anti-aircraft guns, short-range missiles and mortars, were also procured by the US from different countries and supplied to Pakistan, which handed them over to the guerrillas,” the analyst maintained.

The obvious reason for this tactic is to give the impression that the resistance acquired its arms and ammunition from different channels and from different countries – and anywhere other than the United States. Asia Times Online contacts said it is clear that Pakistan would not be the only country from which the US would have procured arms. And such arms could not be destined for the Iraqi security forces because US arms would be given to them.”

The Guardian, April 27, 2005:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/apr/27/iraq.iraq5>

- “Warnings of the onslaught prompted the vast majority of Falluja’s 300,000 people to flee. The city was then declared a free-fire zone on the grounds that the only people left behind must be “terrorists”. Three weeks after the attack was launched last November, the Americans claimed victory. They say they killed about 1,300 people; one week into the siege, a BBC reporter put the unofficial death toll at 2,000. But details of what happened and who the dead were remain obscure. Were many unarmed civilians, as Baghdad-based human rights groups report? Even if they were trying to defend their homes by fighting the Americans, does that make them “terrorists”?...”

“Other glimpses of life in Falluja come from Dr Hafid al-Dulaimi, head of the city’s compensation commission, who reports that 36,000 homes were destroyed in the US onslaught, along with 8,400 shops. Sixty nurseries and schools were ruined, along with 65 mosques and religious sanctuaries.”... “Burhan Fasa’a, a cameraman for the Lebanese Broadcasting Company, reported during the siege that dead family members were buried in their gardens because people could not leave their homes. Refugees told one of us that civilians carrying white flags were gunned down by American soldiers. Corpses were tied to US tanks and paraded around like trophies. Justin Alexander, a volunteer for Christian Peacemaker Teams, recently found hundreds living in tents in the grounds of their homes, or in a single patched-up room. A strict system of identity cards blocks access to anyone whose papers give a birthplace outside Falluja, so long-term residents born elsewhere cannot go home. “Fallujans feel the remnants of their city have been turned into a giant prison,” he reports.”

Iraqi child, Fallujah Rubble

Raw Story, September 23, 2005:

http://rawstory.com/news/2005/CAUGHT_RED_0923.html

- “According to the BBC’s Galpin, reporting for BBC Radio 4 (9/20/05, 18 hrs news script), Iraqi police sources in Basra told the BBC the “two British men were arrested after failing to stop at a checkpoint. There was an exchange of gunfire. The men were wearing traditional Arab clothing, and when the police eventually stopped them, they said they found explosives and weapons in their car...It’s widely believed the two British servicemen were operating undercover.” Undercover? Dressed as Arabs? What were they trying to do that had caught the attention of their colleagues, the Iraqi police?”...

“These elite forces operate under the Special Reconnaissance Regiment and were formed last year by then defence secretary, Geoff Hoon, “to gather human intelligence during counter-terrorist missions.”

The question, of course, is how does firing at Iraqi police while dressed as Arabs and carrying explosives constitute “countering terrorism” or even gathering “intelligence”? The admission by British defence officials is revealing. A glance at the Special Reconnaissance Regiment gives a more concrete idea of the sort of operations these two British soldiers were involved in.”... “Most startlingly, Fulton said that his handlers told him his operations were “sanctioned right at the top... this goes the whole way to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister knows what you are doing.”... “So, based on the methodology of their Regiment, the two British SAS operatives were in Iraq to “penetrate the enemy and be the enemy,” in order of course to “beat the enemy.” Instead of beating the enemy, however, they ended up fomenting massive chaos and killing innocent people, a familiar pattern for critical students of the British role in the Northern Ireland conflict.”

Time Magazine, December 19, 2006:

<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1571751,00.html>

– “The Bush Administration has been quietly nurturing individuals and parties opposed to the Syrian government in an effort to undermine the regime of President Bashar Assad. Parts of the scheme are outlined in a classified, two-page document that says that the U.S. already is “supporting regular meetings of internal and diaspora Syrian activists” in Europe. The document bluntly expresses the hope that “these meetings will facilitate a more coherent strategy and plan of actions for all anti-Assad activists.”... “The document says that Syria’s legislative elections, scheduled for March 2007, “provide a potentially galvanizing issue for... critics of the Assad regime.” To capitalize on that opportunity, the document proposes a secret “election monitoring” scheme, in which “internet accessible materials will be available for printing and dissemination by activists inside the country [Syria] and neighboring countries.”

The proposal also calls for surreptitiously giving money to at least one Syrian politician who, according to the document, intends to run in the election. The effort would also include “voter education campaigns” and public opinion polling, with the first poll “tentatively scheduled in early 2007.”... “The proposal says part of the effort would be run through a foundation operated by Amar Abdulhamid, a Washington-based member of a Syrian umbrella opposition group known as the National Salvation Front (NSF).

The Front includes the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist organization that for decades supported the violent overthrow of the Syrian government, but now says it seeks peaceful, democratic reform.”... “Money for the election-monitoring proposal would be channeled through a State Department program known as the Middle East Partnership Initiative, or MEPI. According to MEPI’s website, the program passes out funds ranging between \$100,000 and \$1 million to promote education and women’s empowerment, as well as economic and political reform, part of a total allocation of \$5 million for Syria that Congress supported earlier this year.”

CNN, May 4, 2007:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/meast/05/03/iraq.main/>

- “Iraqi officials reported the death of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, said to be head of the Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella organization of Sunni militant groups. Caldwell said it

is not known who al-Baghdadi is or whether he exists, and Iraqis may have mistaken al-Jubouri for al-Baghdadi.”

New York Times, July 8, 2007:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/18/world/africa/18iht-iraq.4.6718200.html? _r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/18/world/africa/18iht-iraq.4.6718200.html?_r=1&)

- “For more than a year, the leader of one the most notorious insurgent groups in Iraq was said to be a mysterious Iraqi named **Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi**. As the titular head of the **Islamic State in Iraq**, an organization publicly backed by Al Qaeda, Baghdadi issued a steady stream of incendiary pronouncements. Despite claims by Iraqi officials that he had been killed in May, Baghdadi appeared to have persevered unscathed. On Wednesday, a senior American military spokesman provided a new explanation for Baghdadi’s ability to escape attack: He never existed.

Brigadier General Kevin Bergner, the chief American military spokesman, **said the elusive Baghdadi was actually a fictional character whose audio-taped declarations were provided by an elderly actor named Abu Abdullah al-Naima.**”... “The ploy was to invent Baghdadi, a figure whose very name establishes his Iraqi pedigree, install him as the head of a front organization called the Islamic State of Iraq and then arrange for Masri to swear allegiance to him. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden’s deputy, sought to reinforce the deception by referring to Baghdadi in his video and Internet statements.”... “Bruce Riedel, a former CIA official and a Middle East expert, said that experts had long wondered whether Baghdadi actually existed.”There has been a question mark about this,” he said.”

Reuters, July 18, 2007:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/07/18/us-iraq-qaeda-idUSL1820065720070718?rpc=92>

– “A senior operative for al Qaeda in Iraq who was caught this month has told his U.S. military interrogators a prominent al Qaeda-led group is just a front and its leader fictitious, a military spokesman said on Wednesday. Brigadier-General Kevin Bergner told a news conference that Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, leader of the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq, which was purportedly set up last year, did not exist.”... “Bergner said the information came from an operative called Khalid al-Mashadani who was caught on July 4 and who he said was an intermediary to Osama bin Laden. He said Mashadani was believed to be the most senior Iraqi in the Sunni Islamist al Qaeda in Iraq network. “In

his words, the Islamic State of Iraq is a front organization that masks the foreign influence and leadership within al Qaeda in Iraq in an attempt to put an Iraqi face on the leadership of al Qaeda in Iraq,” Bergner said.”

McClatchy, October 7, 2007:

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article24470350.html>

- “Nearly a month after a mysterious Israeli military airstrike in Syria generated political aftershocks from Washington to North Korea, the Israeli government lifted its official veil of secrecy Tuesday.”... “Israel lifted its ban on reporting that the attack took place after Syrian President Bashar Assad told the British Broadcasting Corp. that Israeli jets had hit an “unused military building.” But Israeli officials refused to say anything about the attack, and almost no one who’d be expected to know — from government officials to former intelligence officers — is talking.”...

New York Times, April 20, 2008:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/20/us/20generals.html?pagewanted=all>

- “To the public, these men are members of a familiar fraternity, presented tens of thousands of times on television and radio as “military analysts” whose long service has equipped them to give authoritative and unfettered judgments about the most pressing issues of the post-Sept. 11 world. Hidden behind that appearance of objectivity, though, is a Pentagon information apparatus that has used those analysts in a campaign to generate favorable news coverage of the administration’s wartime performance, an examination by The New York Times has found.”

Reuters, May 12, 2009:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/05/12/idUSLC786352>

- “Al Qaeda-linked group the Islamic State of Iraq has denied Iraqi government reports that its leader Abu Omar al-Baghdadi has been captured.”... “Some experts say they are unconvinced that Baghdadi exists. They say he is a fictional character invented by al Qaeda in Iraq as part of a media strategy to put an Iraqi figurehead at the top of an organisation that is otherwise foreign-run.”

Huffington Post, May 24, 2009:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/23/baghdad-suicide-bomber-ki_0_n_190455.html

- “The reported capture of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the head of the Islamic State of Iraq, could mark a setback to insurgents as they try to intensify attacks after a relative lull. In the past, however, Iraqi officials have reported al-Baghdadi’s arrest or killing, only to acknowledge later that they were wrong. The U.S. military has even said al-Baghdadi could be a fictitious character used to give an Iraqi face to an organization dominated by foreign al-Qaida fighters.”... “In 2007, Iraq’s government reported that al-Baghdadi had been killed and released photos of what it said was his body. Later, security officials said they had arrested al-Baghdadi. In both cases, the U.S. military said at the time it could not be confirmed _ and the reports turned out not to be true.”

Reuters, April 19, 2010:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/04/19/us-iraq-violence-alqaeda-idUSTRE63I3CL20100419>

- “Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said al Qaeda’s Iraq leader, Abu Ayyub al-Masri, and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the purported head of its local affiliate, the Islamic State of Iraq, were found dead in a hole in the ground inside a house after it was surrounded and

stormed by troops.”... “Their deaths are potentially devastating blows to al Qaeda Iraq,” U.S. Vice President Joe Biden told reporters in Washington, adding the operation “demonstrates the improved security strength and capacity of Iraqi security forces.”

Al-Jazeera, April 25, 2010:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2010/04/201042572834684919.html> -

“Al-Masri and al-Baghdadi were found dead in a basement after their safe house about 10km outside the town of Tikrit was hit by a missile and stormed by Iraqi and US troops.”

Washington Post, May 25, 2010:

[http://voices.washingtonpost.com/spy-](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/spy-talk/2010/05/cia_group_had_wacky_ideas_to_d.html)

[talk/2010/05/cia_group_had_wacky_ideas_to_d.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/spy-talk/2010/05/cia_group_had_wacky_ideas_to_d.html)

- “During planning for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the CIA’s Iraq Operations Group kicked around a number of ideas for discrediting Saddam Hussein in the eyes of his people. One was to create a video purporting to show the Iraqi dictator having sex with a teenage boy, according to two former CIA officials familiar with the project. “It would look like it was taken by a hidden camera,” said one of the former officials. “Very grainy, like it was a secret videotaping of a sex session.”... “Another idea was to interrupt Iraqi television programming with a fake special news bulletin. An actor playing Hussein would announce that he was stepping down in favor of his (much-reviled) son Uday.”... “The agency actually did make a video purporting to show Osama bin Laden and his cronies sitting around a campfire swigging bottles of liquor and savoring their conquests with boys, one of the former CIA officers recalled, chuckling at the memory. The actors were drawn from “some of us darker-skinned employees,” he said.”

USA Today, June 2, 2010:

http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2010-06-01-iraq-christians_N.htm

- “Before the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 there were about 1.4 million Christians in Iraq, a Muslim-dominated nation of nearly 30 million. Since then, about 50% of Iraq’s Christians have fled the country, taking refuge in neighboring Jordan, Syria, Europe and the USA, according to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).”

NY Daily News, September 5, 2010:

<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/tony-blair-dick-cheney-wanted-remake-middle-east-9-11-invade-iraq-syria-iran-article-1.438532#>

- “Dick Cheney wanted to invade several Middle East nations, not just Iraq, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair reveals in his new book.”... “Cheney “would have worked through the whole lot, Iraq, Syria, Iran, dealing with all their surrogates in the course of it — Hezbollah, Hamas, etc.,” Blair wrote in his memoir, “A Journey.”

CBC News, April 8, 2011:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/u-s-admits-funding-syrian-opposition-1.987112>

- “The U.S. State Department acknowledged Monday it has been funding opponents of Syrian President Bashar Assad, following the release of secret diplomatic cables obtained by WikiLeaks that document the funding. The files show that up to \$6.3 million US was funnelled to the Movement for Justice and Development, a London-based dissident organization that operates the Barada TV satellite channel, which broadcasts anti-government news into Syria. Another \$6 million went to support a variety of initiatives, including training for journalists and activists, between 2006 and 2010.”... “On Monday, the Interior Ministry identified the gangs as “armed Salafi groups,” referring to an ultraconservative form of Islam that has its roots in Saudi Arabia and can be found all

over the region. The statement carried by the state news agency said they were seeking to establish “emirates” and were “abusing the freedoms and reforms launched in the comprehensive program with a timetable by President Bashar Assad.”

Reuters, April 18, 2011:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/18/us-usa-syria-wikileaks-idUSTRE73H0E720110418>

- “The State Department has secretly funded Syrian opposition groups, according to diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks, The Washington Post reported on Monday. The cables show that the State Department has funneled as much as \$6 million since 2006 to a group of Syrian exiles to operate a London-based satellite channel, Barada TV, and finance activities inside Syria, the Post said. Barada TV began broadcasting in April 2009 but has ramped up operations to cover the mass protests in Syria that began last month as part of a long-standing campaign to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad the Post said. The U.S. money for Syrian opposition figures began flowing under President George W. Bush after political ties with Damascus were frozen in 2005, the newspaper said. The financial backing has continued under President Barack Obama, even as his administration sought to rebuild relations with Assad, the Post said.”

Christianity Today, July 7, 2011:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/july/syria-christians-assad.html>

- “This spring, many Syrian Christians rejected protestors’ demands for embattled president Bashar al-Assad to resign. But Christians did broadly endorse democratic reforms that would bring an end to dictatorship.”... “In late May, International Christian Concern, an evangelical ministry to the persecuted church, released to Christianity Today an anonymous open letter from a “trusted Syrian source” that explains why many Syrian Christians support Assad’s regime.”... “The secular government allows churches to preach, teach, evangelize, publish religious materials, and build sanctuaries. Christians have access to education and employment.”

New York Times, September 27, 2011:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/28/world/middleeast/fearing-change-syria-christians-back-bashar-al-assad.html>

- “For many Syrian Christians, Mr. Assad remains predictable in a region where unpredictability has driven their brethren from war-racked places like Iraq and Lebanon, and where others have felt threatened in post-revolutionary Egypt.”... They fear that in the event the president falls, they may be subjected to reprisals at the hands of a conservative Sunni leadership for what it sees as Christian support of the Assad family. They worry that the struggle to dislodge Mr. Assad could turn into a civil war, unleashing sectarian bloodshed in a country where minorities, ethnic and religious, have found a way to coexist for the most part.”

The Guardian, November 1, 2011:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2011/nov/01/christians-arab-street-islam>

- “Secular dictatorships such as those of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, and even of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Muammar Gadaffi in Libya were a bloody nightmare for political dissidents. But Christian minorities felt protected from Islamic persecution and were allowed to practise their religious faith.”... “It has happened already in Iraq, due to the “Anglo-American war” started in 2003. At that time, the number of Chaldeans, the

Christian Iraqis, was between 800,000 and 1.4 million. In 2009-2010, it was estimated are between 400,000 and 500,000, and rapidly decreasing. Cairo's violent repression shows a similar process is under way in Egypt as well, where they still represent roughly 10% of the population."

The Telegraph, November 27, 2011:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8919057/Leading-Libyan-Islamist-met-Free-Syrian-Army-opposition-group.html>

- "Abdulhakim Belhadj, head of the Tripoli Military Council and the former leader of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, "met with Free Syrian Army leaders in Istanbul and on the border with Turkey," said a military official working with Mr Belhadj. "Mustafa Abdul Jalil (the interim Libyan president) sent him there."... "The meetings came as a sign of a growing ties between Libya's fledgling government and the Syrian opposition. The Daily Telegraph on Saturday revealed that the new Libyan authorities had offered money and weapons to the growing insurgency against Bashar al-Assad."

Jerusalem Post, December 20, 2011:

<http://www.jpost.com/Defense/US-commander-visits-Israel-to-finalize-missile-drill>

- "Israel is moving forward with plans to hold the largest-ever missile defense exercise in its history this spring amid Iranian efforts to obtain nuclear weapons. Last week, Lt.-Gen. Frank Gorenc, commander of the US's Third Air Force based in Germany, visited Israel to finalize plans for the upcoming drill, expected to see the deployment of several thousand American soldiers in Israel."

Saudi Gazette, February 11, 2012:

<http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=20120207117076>

- "The six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) will soon recognize the Free Syrian Army as the sole and legitimate representative of the Syrian people, a high-ranking official in Bahrain told the Saudi Gazette."

National Post, February 16, 2012:

<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/al-qaeda-has-likely-infiltrated-syria-opposition-behind-recent-suicide-bombings-u-s>

- "Al-Qaeda's branch in Iraq likely carried out recent suicide bombings in Syria and has infiltrated opposition forces fighting President Bashar al-Assad's regime, the U.S. intelligence chief said Thursday."... "Another disturbing phenomenon that we've seen recently, apparently, is the presence of extremists who have infiltrated the opposition groups. "The opposition groups in many cases may not be aware that they're there," said Clapper, director of national intelligence."

Christian Science Monitor, February 17, 2012/:

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/0217/Top-US-official-Al-Qaeda-in-Iraq-joining-fight-against-Syria-s-Assad>

- “We believe that Al Qaeda in Iraq is extending its reach into Syria,” Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper said in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. It was the first time that a top US official publicly confirmed the involvement of Al Qaeda in Iraq, or AQI, in the uprising against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, which began nearly a year ago as peaceful protests for an end to his family’s four-decade-long rule.”...” Clapper said that AQI extremists appear to have secretly joined some of the groups of civilians and military deserters – known collectively as the Free Syrian Army – who have taken up arms in response to the Assad regime’s brutal crackdown on anti-government protests.”

The Independent, February 23, 2012:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/rebel-forces-armed-by-wealthy-exiles-7320510.html>

- “As Syria slides towards a civil war, a wealthy Syrian exile is racing to provide additional arms and ammunition to the loosely organised bands of rebels fighting under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Abu Qotaiba, a nom de guerre, has lived for the past 19 years in a wealthy Gulf country. He told The Independent he was buying weapons from arms dealers in Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan and sending them into Syria, despite the cost of an AK-47 rising from about \$300 to about \$1,500. “Now is a chance for [dealers] to sell them at a high price,” Abu Qotaiba said. Earlier this week, US Senator John McCain told reporters that there were ways to get weapons to the Syrian opposition without direct US involvement.

“People that are being massacred deserve to have the ability to defend themselves,” he said.”... “The FSA has proved successful at getting hold of arms, he said. Syrian security forces can no longer go wherever they wanted in the country, especially inside cities such as Homs and Idlib because some streets were controlled by the FSA. Abu Qotaiba refused to say where the Libyan weapons came from, only denying that the arms were provided by Libya’s National Transitional Council. They came “through some revolutionaries,” he said. “There are many Libyan people trying to help. They want to return the slap to Bashar because he supported Gaddafi. They have lived our situation.”

CNN, February 23, 2012:

http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/23/world/meast/syria-unrest/index.html?_s=PM:MIDDLEEAST

– “Diplomatic sources told CNN that a number of Arab nations are supplying arms to the Syrian opposition. The sources wouldn’t identify which countries.”

Al-Arabiya News, February 27, 2012:

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/02/27/197380.html>

- “In other news, Qatar’s prime minister said Monday he was in favor of delivering arms to the Syrian opposition that is battling President Bashar al-Assad’s regime. “We should do whatever necessary to help them, including giving them weapons to defend themselves,” Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani said during an official visit to Norway.”

Foreign Policy, February 27, 2012:

http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/02/27/saudi-arabia-is-arming-the-syrian-opposition/?wp_login_redirect=0

– “According to news reports confirmed by a member of the Syrian opposition, Riyadh currently sends weapons on an ad hoc basis to the Syrian opposition by way of Sunni

tribal allies in Iraq and Lebanon. But in light of recent developments, more weapons are almost certainly on their way.”

Market Watch, February 28, 2012:

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/ten-companies-profiting-most-from-war-2012-02-28>

- “Global sales of arms and military services by the 100 largest defense contractors increased in 2010 to \$411.1 billion, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. The increase reflects a decade-long trend of growing military spending. Since 2002, total arms sales among the 100 largest arms manufacturers have increased 60%.”... “While many industries continued to suffer in 2010 as a result of the financial crisis, leaders in the arms and military services were largely unaffected.”

Foreign Policy, March 6, 2012:

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/03/06/obama-administration-moves-to-aid-syrian-opposition/>

- “The Obama administration is moving to provide direct assistance to the internal opposition in Syria for the first time, marking a shift in U.S. policy toward a more aggressive plan to help oust President Bashar al-Assad.”... “These moves are going to invest the U.S. in a much deeper sense with the opposition,” one administration official said. “U.S. policy is now aligned with enabling the opposition to overthrow the Assad regime. This codifies a significant change in our Syria policy.”

Washington Post, May 15, 2012:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/syrian-rebels-get-influx-of-arms-with-gulf-neighbors-money-us-coordination/2012/05/15/gIQAds2TSU_story.html

- “Syrian rebels battling the regime of President Bashar al-Assad have begun receiving significantly more and better weapons in recent weeks, an effort paid for by Persian Gulf nations and coordinated in part by the United States, according to opposition activists and U.S. and foreign officials.”... “Material is being stockpiled in Damascus, in Idlib near the Turkish border and in Zabadani on the Lebanese border. Opposition activists who two months ago said the rebels were running out of ammunition said this week that the flow of weapons — most still bought on the black market in neighboring countries or from elements of the Syrian military — has significantly increased after a decision by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other gulf states to provide millions of dollars in funding each month. Syria’s Muslim Brotherhood also said it has opened its own supply channel to the rebels, using resources from wealthy private individuals and money from gulf states, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar, said Mulham al-Drobi, a member of the Brotherhood’s executive committee.”

The Telegraph, May 27, 2012:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/bbc/9293620/BBC-News-uses-Iraq-photo-to-illustrate-Syrian-massacre.html>

- “The BBC is facing criticism after it accidentally used a picture taken in Iraq in 2003 to illustrate the senseless massacre of children in Syria.”

Fides News Agency, June 9, 2012:

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/31694?idnews=31694&lan=eng#.VdynFpfhqx>

- “Exodus of Christians in the west of Syria: the Christian population has left the town of Qusayr, near Homs, following an ultimatum from the military chief of the armed

opposition, Abdel Salam Harba. This is what local sources of Fides report, indicating that, following the outbreak of the conflict, out of the ten thousand faithful who lived in the town, only a thousand have remained, who have now been forced to flee in haste to fury. Some mosques in the city have re-launched the message, announcing from the minarets: “Christians must leave Qusayr within six days, which expires this Friday.”

Fides News Agency, June 12, 2012:

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/31707?idnews=31707&lan=eng#.VdynFJfnhqx>

– “The Christian Maurice Bitar was killed in Qusayr, near the town of Homs where the Christian population – about a thousand people out of 10 thousand who lived there before the beginning of the violence – has been forced to flee after the ‘ultimatum launched by an armed faction in the opposition forces led by General Abdel Salam Harba.’... “The armed opposition, in fact, as confirmed by numerous observers in Syria and abroad, is gradually radicalizing towards Sunni extremist ideology.”

Fides News Agency, June 13, 2012:

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/31719?idnews=31719&lan=eng#.VdynFJfnhqy>

– “A band of radical militiamen broke into the Greek-catholic church of St. Elias in Qusayr this morning, near the town of Homs, desecrating it. The militiamen forced the door, rang the bells in mockery, laughed at the sacred symbols of the Christian faith with the sole purpose of carrying out a demonstrative act and making a mockery of the Christian community. “It is the first time, in the ongoing conflict, that such an episode occurs, in which sacred symbols are deliberately hit,” notes with concern a local source of Fides.”

New York Times, June 21, 2012:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/21/world/middleeast/cia-said-to-aid-in-steering-arms-to-syrian-rebels.html?pagewanted=all>

– “A small number of C.I.A. officers are operating secretly in southern Turkey, helping allies decide which Syrian opposition fighters across the border will receive arms to fight the Syrian government, according to American officials and Arab intelligence officers.”

New York Times, June 28, 2012:

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/29/opinion/syrias-threatened-christians.html?_r=0

– “Earlier this month, reports came from the Syrian city of Qusayr of an ominous warning to the town’s Christians: Either join the Sunni-led opposition against Bashar al-Assad or leave. Soon after, thousands of Christians fled the town.”... “After decades of protection by a secular-leaning dictatorship, the Qusayr ultimatum warned of a dark future for Syria’s Christian community.”... “Throughout the years, Christians, like many other minorities in the region, have lent their support to those regimes that have guaranteed their security and religious freedom. In Iraq, Christians rose to the highest levels of society under Saddam Hussein’s regime, while in Egypt, Coptic Christians were protected from ultraconservative Salafists under Hosni Mubarak. As secular leaders from the secretive Alawite sect, the Assad dynasty largely preserved Christian life, protecting Syria’s minorities from what was perceived as a collective threat from the country’s Sunni majority.”

The Telegraph, July 12, 2012:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9396256/Al-Qaeda-tries-to-carve-out-a-war-for-itself-in-Syria.html>

- “The Daily Telegraph has seen al-Qaeda’s flag flying openly in some areas of Idlib and Aleppo provinces that straddle the borders with Turkey and Iraq and fighters in the rebel Free Syrian Army have told how representatives of the militant group have tried in past months to win control of towns and villages.”...

Reuters, July 20, 2012:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/01/us-usa-syria-obama-order-idUSBRE8701OK20120801>

- “President Barack Obama has signed a secret order authorizing U.S. support for rebels seeking to depose Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his government, U.S. sources familiar with the matter said.”

Fides News Agency, July 23, 2012:

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/31978?idnews=31978&lan=eng#.Vdkx3Zfnhqy>

- “Islamist groups in action in Damascus: the victims are Christian civilians and Iraqi refugees.”

Wall Street Journal, July 26, 2012:

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10000872396390443343704577551281530782466>

- “Al Qaeda in Syria (often operating as the “Al Nusra Front for the People of the Levant”) is using traffickers—some ideologically aligned, some motivated by money—to secure routes through Turkey and Iraq for foreign fighters, most of whom are from the Middle East and North Africa. A growing number of donors from the Persian Gulf and Levant appear to be sending financial support, according to U.S. Treasury Department officials I interviewed.”...

The Star, July 27, 2012:

http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2012/07/27/al_qaeda_is_seeking_to_manipulate_tensions_in_the_middle_east_to_its_own_advantage_warn_experts.html

- “Another fear is the number of foreign fighters with different agendas now in Syria. Two photographers being held captive in Syria, freed on Friday, told the New York Times that foreign fighters from Bangladesh, Chechnya, Pakistan and Britain were among their captors. “They were definitely quite extreme in their religious beliefs,” Dutch freelance photographer Jeroen Oerlemans told the paper. “All day we were spoken to about the Koran and how they would bring sharia law to Syria. I don’t think they were Al Qaeda, they seemed too amateurish for that. They said, ‘We’re not Al Qaeda, but Al Qaeda is down the road.’”... “The Turks provide a safe haven along the borders and do some training and intelligence work. The Jordanians have the same role. The Saudis provide weapons and money. The CIA helps with command and control.”

Assyrian International News Agency, July 29, 2012:

<http://www.aina.org/news/2012072912019.htm>

- “The Vatican has received reports deemed credible that Sunni rebels financed by Qatar were attacking churches and ordering Christians to leave their homes.”

Global Post, July 31, 2012:

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/syria/120731/aleppo-christians-islamists-jihadis-al-qaeda-iraq-sectarian-conflict>

- “As evidence mounts that foreign Islamists are fighting alongside Syria’s increasingly radicalized rebels, Christians in Aleppo and elsewhere are taking up arms, often supplied by the regime.”... “We saw what happened to the Christians in Iraq,” Abu George, a

Christian resident of Aleppo's Aziza district told GlobalPost. "What is going on in Aleppo is not a popular revolution for democracy and freedom. The fighters of the so-called Free Syrian Army are radical Sunnis who want to establish an Islamic state."

PBS, July 31, 2012:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/world-july-dec12-syria_07-31/

- "The plight of Christians in Iraq has long worried Syria's estimated 2 million Christians, around 10 percent of the population. The nightmare of similar persecution has led them to support the secular regime of President Bashar al-Assad, which presents itself as a defender of minorities."

McClatchy, August 1, 2012:

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/middle-east/article24733537.html#.UjCNA4LDQ7B>

- "The Obama administration quietly has cleared the way for U.S. residents to buy weapons for the rebels who are fighting to topple Syrian President Bashar Assad, granting a Washington-based advocacy group a rare license to collect money for arms and other equipment. The license, which the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control issued last month without fanfare, gives the nonprofit Syrian Support Group the authority to take in money and pass it directly to armed insurgents. Previously, U.S. entities' assistance to Syria was limited to humanitarian and educational programs."

The Guardian, August 2, 2012:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/02/syria-christians-catalyst-peace>

- "In Iraq, after the [fall of Saddam Hussein](#), western allies admitted that they had no postwar plan and many have paid the price for this – especially the Iraqi minorities; since Saddam fell, hundreds of thousands of Christians as well as Muslims have fled Iraq in the face of sectarian violence and terrorism."..." Despite what you might read in much of the western media, Syria is an enlightened, secular society with a deeply spiritual core and the common belief is that Syria is for everybody. A fundamentalist state would destroy the traditions of co-existence and religious harmony that have existed here since the fall of the Ottoman Empire nearly 100 years ago. Syrian independence was won with the blood of all Syrians – Muslim, Christian, Druze, Alawite and Kurdish."... "Christians were not persecuted even before the Assad family came to power – in the 1940s, Syria had a Christian prime minister."

The Globe and Mail, August 2, 2012:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/obama-authorizes-secret-cia-support-for-syrian-rebels/article4457317/>

- "President Barack Obama has signed a secret order authorizing U.S. support for rebels seeking to depose Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his government, U.S. sources familiar with the matter said."..." A U.S. government source acknowledged that under provisions of the presidential finding, the United States was collaborating with a secret command center operated by Turkey and its allies."..." Turkey's moderate Islamist government has been demanding Assad's departure with growing vehemence. Turkish authorities are said by current and former U.S. government officials to be increasingly involved in providing Syrian rebels with training and possibly equipment. European government sources said wealthy families in Saudi Arabia and Qatar were providing

significant financing to the rebels. Senior officials of the Saudi and Qatari governments have publicly called for Assad's departure.

On Tuesday, NBC News reported that the Free Syrian Army had obtained nearly two dozen surface-to-air missiles, weapons that could be used against Assad's helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. Syrian government armed forces have employed such air power more extensively in recent days. NBC said the shoulder-fired missiles, also known as MANPADs, had been delivered to the rebels via Turkey."... "Current and former U.S. and European officials previously said that weapons supplies, which were being organized and financed by Qatar and Saudi Arabia, were largely limited to guns and a limited number of anti-tank weapons, such as bazookas."

New York Times, August 29, 2012:

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/30/world/middleeast/syrian-group-in-united-states-seeks-to-arm-rebels-against-assad.html?pagewanted=2&_r=1&pagewanted=all&

- "The Syrian Support Group, incorporated here in April as a nonprofit, has few resources and, so far, few donations, and whether it succeeds in its larger goal remains to be seen. But it is already serving as a conduit between the United States and the armed forces seeking to topple Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, and having an effect on American policy. The group has surprisingly extensive contacts among rebel commanders of the Free Syrian Army, a rare license from the Department of Treasury allowing it to sidestep sanctions and a conviction that the assistance the administration has so far offered Syrians — mainly communications equipment — is simply not enough to defeat Mr. Assad. Its members regularly consult with State Department officials, including the American ambassador to Syria, Robert S. Ford, who has been based in Washington since the embassy in Damascus closed in February.

Their unusual relationship with the American government reflects the Obama administration's constrained, at times convoluted policy toward Syria's raging conflict."... "Mr. Sakka, a telecommunications engineer in Toronto, said the group hopes to raise \$7 million to help the Free Syrian Army level the playing field against Mr. Assad's overwhelmingly superior forces with the purchase of more sophisticated weaponry, including antiaircraft and antitank missiles."... The group became more organized last spring when it formally incorporated, started its Web site and, in May, hired a former NATO political officer, Brian Sayers, as its director of government relations in Washington after finding him through an online employment agency. That same month, it applied for a license from the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control to raise money for the rebels. It was granted on July 23 after the Obama administration intensified its efforts to provide humanitarian and other nonlethal assistance inside Syria. American law restricts arms sales generally, and sanctions prohibit them to Syria specifically. But while the group cannot ship weapons, it can send money that the rebels can use to buy them."

Time Magazine, September 12, 2012:

<http://world.time.com/2012/09/12/syrias-looted-past-how-ancient-artifacts-are-being-traded-for-guns/>

- "Syria's grim human toll—at least 20,000 dead, some 250,000 registered refugees and an estimated 1.2 million internally displaced, according to the UN—has been echoed by devastating attacks on the country's archaeological heritage. All six of Syria's UNESCO world heritage sites have been damaged by rocket, tank and small-arms fire, some

“potentially irreversibly,” according to archaeologist Emma Cunliffe, a PhD researcher at the United Kingdom’s Durham University who has just published a report during the course of her Fellowship at Global Heritage Fund, which details the destruction of Syria’s historical sites. “Archaeologically speaking, Syria is a disaster zone,” she says.”

The Times, September 14, 2012:

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/middleeast/article3537770.ece>

- “A Libyan ship carrying the largest consignment of weapons for Syria since the uprising began has docked in Turkey and most of its cargo is making its way to rebels on the front lines, The Times has learnt. Among more than 400 tons of cargo the vessel was carrying were SAM-7 surface-to-air anti-aircraft missiles and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), which Syrian sources said could be a game-changer for the rebels.”

Oilprice, September 17, 2012:

<http://oilprice.com/Energy/Energy-General/Qatar-Rich-and-Dangerous.html>

- “The Emir declared that foreign troops should be sent into Syria. At the Friends of Syria conference in February, Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani said, “We should do whatever necessary to help [the Syrian opposition], including giving them weapons to defend themselves.” Why would Qatar want to become involved in Syria where they have little invested? A map reveals that the kingdom is a geographic prisoner in a small enclave on the Persian Gulf coast.”

Time Magazine, September 18, 2012:

<http://world.time.com/2012/09/18/syrias-secular-and-islamist-rebels-who-are-the-saudis-and-the-qatars-arming/>

- “As TIME reports here, disorder and distrust plague two of the rebels’ international patrons: Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The two Gulf powerhouses are no longer on the same page when it comes to determining who among the plethora of mushrooming Syrian rebel groups should be armed. The rift surfaced in August, with the alleged Saudi and Qatari representatives in charge of funneling free weaponry to the rebels clearly backing different factions among the groups — including various shades of secular and Islamist militias — under the broad umbrella that is the Free Syrian Army (FSA).”...

“The middlemen of the two countries operate out of Turkey, the regional military power. Ankara has been quite public with its denunciation of Assad even as it denies any involvement in shuffling weapons across the border to Syrian rebels.”... “According to sources who have dealt with him, Saudi Arabia’s man in the Istanbul control center is a Lebanese politician named Okab Sakr. He belongs to the Future Movement, the organization of former Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, which has a history of enmity with Damascus.”... “The bulk of Ahrar al-Sham’s substantial funding reportedly comes from Kuwait.”

Business Insider, October 9, 2012:

<http://www.businessinsider.com/us-syria-heavy-weapons-jihadists-2012-10>

- “The official position is that the U.S. has refused to allow heavy weapons into Syria. But there’s growing evidence that U.S. agents — particularly murdered ambassador Chris Stevens — were at least aware of heavy weapons moving from Libya to jihadist Syrian rebels.”... In November 2011 The Telegraph reported that Belhadj, acting as head of the Tripoli Military Council, “met with Free Syrian Army [FSA] leaders in Istanbul and on the border with Turkey” in an effort by the new Libyan government to provide money and weapons to the growing insurgency in Syria. Last month The Times of

London reported that a Libyan ship “carrying the largest consignment of weapons for Syria … has docked in Turkey.” The shipment reportedly weighed 400 tons and included SA-7 surface-to-air anti-craft missiles and rocket-propelled grenades. Those heavy weapons are most likely from Muammar Gaddafi’s stock of about 20,000 portable heat-seeking missiles—the bulk of them SA-7s—that the Libyan leader obtained from the former Eastern bloc. Reuters reports that Syrian rebels have been using those heavy weapons to shoot down Syrian helicopters and fighter jets.”

New York Times, October 14, 2012:

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/15/world/middleeast/jihadists-receiving-most-arms-sent-to-syrian-rebels.html?_r=0

— “Most of the arms shipped at the behest of Saudi Arabia and Qatar to supply Syrian rebel groups fighting the government of Bashar al-Assad are going to hard-line Islamic jihadists, and not the more secular opposition groups that the West wants to bolster, according to American officials and Middle Eastern diplomats.”… “The opposition groups that are receiving the most of the lethal aid are exactly the ones we don’t want to have it,” said one American official familiar with the outlines of those findings, commenting on an operation that in American eyes has increasingly gone awry.”

NDTV, November 9, 2012:

<http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/there-is-no-civil-war-in-syria-bashar-al-assad-504198>

- “Instead of civil war, Assad said, Syria is facing “terrorism through proxies,” referring to foreign backing of the rebellion against his regime.”

McClatchy, December 2, 2012:

“Nearly a year later, however, Jabhat al Nusra, which U.S. officials believe has links to al Qaida, has become essential to the frontline operations of the rebels fighting to topple Assad.”… The group’s prominence makes clear the dilemma of Syria’s revolutionaries, as well as those who might provide support to them. Though members of Nusra operate independently of the other rebel groups that have taken up arms and particularly those that are calling for elections if Assad is deposed it is increasingly clear that their operations are closely coordinated with more secular rebels.”

Al-Jazeera, December 2, 2012:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/201212214201962755.html>

- “Officials say counter-terrorism forces have arrested Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, head of the Islamic State of Iraq.”… Iraqi media has been reporting that the man in custody is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who was named head of the Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella organisation of armed groups, two years ago after the killing of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi in a US air strike in 2010. “It’s not known whether Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the man who is said to have taken over the al-Qaeda organisation here is actually Iraqi, or, in fact, even exists or is a composite of several people,” said Arraf.”

Reuters, December 7, 2012:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/07/us-syria-crisis-rebels-idUSBRE8B60QX20121207>

- “Syrian rebel groups meeting in Turkey elected a 30-member unified command on Friday at talks attended by security officials from international powers, delegates said. The 30 included many with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists, and excluded the most senior officers who had defected from President Bashar al-Assad’s military,

they said."... "Another delegate said that two-thirds of the leadership had ties to the Muslim Brotherhood or were politically allied with the group, a composition which resembles that of the civilian opposition leadership coalition created under Western and Arab auspices in Qatar last month.

"We are witnessing the result of the Qatari and Turkish creations," the delegate said, adding that the 30 are a mix of officers who had defected from the military, which is dominated by Assad's minority Alawite sect, and civilians-turned rebels. Security officials from the United States, Britain, France, the Gulf and Jordan have been attending the talks, which come days before a conference for the Friends of Syria, a grouping of dozens of countries that have mostly pledged non-military aid to rebels fighting to oust Assad. The new military leadership includes Jamal Marouf, an Islamist commander and Ahmad al-Issa from al-Zawiya region in Idlib, as well as Colonel Abdelbasset al-Tawil, who has links with Salafists in the province."

Business Insider, December 9, 2012:

<http://www.businessinsider.com/obama-admin-admits-to-covertly-sending-heavy-weapons-to-syrian-rebels-2012-12>

- "The Obama administration has decided to launch a covert operation to send heavy weapons to Syrian rebels, Christina Lamb of The Sunday Times of London reports. Diplomatic sources told the Sunday Times that the U.S. "bought weapons from the stockpiles of Libya's former dictator Muammar Gaddafi."

Sunday Times, December 9, 2012:

http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/National/article1173125.ece

- "The United States is launching a covert operation to send weapons to Syrian rebels for the first time as it ramps up military efforts to oust President Bashar al-Assad. Mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and anti-tank missiles will be sent through friendly Middle Eastern countries already supplying the rebels, according to well-placed diplomatic sources. The Americans have bought some of the weapons from the stockpiles of Muammar Gadaffi, the Libyan dictator killed last year. They include SA-7 missiles, which can be used to shoot down aircraft."

Daily Mail, January 29, 2013:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20130129213824/http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2270219/U-S-planned-launch-chemical-weapon-attack-Syria-blame-Assad.html> -

"Leaked emails have allegedly proved that the White House gave the green light to a chemical weapons attack in Syria that could be blamed on Assad's regime and in turn, spur international military action in the devastated country. A report released on Monday contains an email exchange between two senior officials at British-based contractor Britam Defence where a scheme 'approved by Washington' is outlined explaining that Qatar would fund rebel forces in Syria to use chemical weapons."

Yahoo, January 30, 2013:

<https://in.news.yahoo.com/us-backed-plan-launch-chemical-weapon-attack-syria-045648224.html>

- "The Obama administration gave green signal to a chemical weapons attack plan in Syria that could be blamed on President Bashar al-Assad's regime and in turn, spur international military action in the devastated country, leaked documents have shown. A new report, that contains an email exchange between two senior officials at British-based contractor Britam Defence, showed a scheme 'approved by Washington'. As per the

scheme ‘Qatar would fund rebel forces in Syria to use chemical weapons,’ the Daily Mail reports.”

New York Times, February 28, 2013:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/01/world/middleeast/us-pledges-60-million-to-syrian-opposition.html>

- “The United States is also providing \$60 million to help the political wing of the Syrian anti-Assad coalition improve the delivery of basic services like sanitation and education in areas it has already wrested from the government’s control.”

BBC News, March 1, 2013:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-21612130>

- “Mr Kerry said the US would provide direct support to rebel forces in the form of medical and food supplies. He also promised an additional \$60m (£40m) in aid to the opposition to help it deliver basic governance and other services in rebel-controlled areas.”

The Telegraph, March 8, 2013:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9918785/US-and-Europe-in-major-airlift-of-arms-to-Syrian-rebels-through-Zagreb.html>

- “Decisions by William Hague, the Foreign Secretary, to provide non-lethal assistance and training, announced in the past week, were preceded by much greater though less direct Western involvement in the rebel cause, according to a Croat newspaper. It claimed 3,000 tons of weapons dating back to the former Yugoslavia have been sent in 75 planeloads from Zagreb airport to the rebels, largely via Jordan since November.”... “The shipments were allegedly paid for by Saudi Arabia at the bidding of the United States, with assistance on supplying the weapons organised through Turkey and Jordan, Syria’s neighbours. But the report added that as well as from Croatia, weapons came “from several other European countries including Britain”, without specifying if they were British-supplied or British-procured arms.”

The Guardian, March 8, 2013:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/08/west-training-syrian-rebels-jordan> – “Western training of Syrian rebels is under way in Jordan in an effort to strengthen secular elements in the opposition as a bulwark against Islamic extremism, and to begin building security forces to maintain order in the event of Bashar al-Assad’s fall.”... “According to European and Jordanian sources the western training in Jordan has been going on since last year and is focused on senior Syrian army officers who defected.”... For western and Saudi backers of the opposition, Jordan has become a preferable option through which to channel aid than Turkey. Ankara has been criticised for allowing extremist groups, such as the al-Nusra Front, become dominant on the northern front while it focused on what it sees as the growing threat of Kurdish secessionism. “The Americans now trust us more than the Turks, because with the Turks everything is about gaining leverage for action against the Kurds,” said a Jordanian source familiar with official thinking in Amman. The US has announced an extra \$60m (£40.2m) in direct aid to the rebels, including military rations and medical kits.”

Reuters, March 10, 2013:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/10/us-syria-crisis-rebels-usa-idUSBRE9290FI20130310> – “Americans are training Syrian anti-government fighters in Jordan, the German weekly Der Spiegel said on Sunday”...

New York Times, April 20, 2013:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/21/world/middleeast/kerry-says-us-to-double-aid-to-the-opposition-in-syria.html> – “Secretary of State John Kerry announced Sunday morning that the United States would double its aid to the Syrian opposition, providing \$123 million in fresh assistance.”

New York Times, April 27, 2013:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/28/world/middleeast/islamist-rebels-gains-in-syria-create-dilemma-for-us.html?pagewanted=all&r=1> – “In Syria’s largest city, Aleppo, rebels aligned with Al Qaeda control the power plant, run the bakeries and head a court that applies Islamic law. Elsewhere, they have seized government oil fields, put employees back to work and now profit from the crude they produce. Across Syria, rebel-held areas are dotted with Islamic courts staffed by lawyers and clerics, and by fighting brigades led by extremists. Even the Supreme Military Council, the umbrella rebel organization whose formation the West had hoped would sideline radical groups, is stocked with commanders who want to infuse Islamic law into a future Syrian government. Nowhere in rebel-controlled Syria is there a secular fighting force to speak of.”

BBC News, May 6, 2013:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22424188> – “Testimony from victims of the conflict in Syria suggests rebels have used the nerve agent, sarin, a leading member of a UN commission of inquiry has said.”

Washington Times, May 6, 2013:

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/may/6/syrian-rebels-used-sarin-nerve-gas-not-assads-regi/> – “Testimony from victims strongly suggests it was the rebels, not the Syrian government, that used Sarin nerve gas during a recent incident in the revolution-wracked nation, a senior U.N. diplomat said Monday.”

The Guardian, May 8, 2013:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/08/free-syrian-army-rebels-defect-islamist-group>

- “Syria’s main armed opposition group, the Free Syrian Army (FSA), is losing fighters and capabilities to Jabhat al-Nusra, an Islamist organisation with links to al-Qaida that is emerging as the best-equipped, financed and motivated force fighting Bashar al-Assad’s regime.”... “Illustrating their plight, FSA commanders say that entire units have gone over to al-Nusra while others have lost a quarter or more of their strength to them recently. “Fighters feel proud to join al-Nusra because that means power and influence,” said Abu Ahmed, a former teacher from Deir Hafer who now commands an FSA brigade in the countryside near Aleppo. “Al-Nusra fighters rarely withdraw for shortage of ammunition or fighters and they leave their target only after liberating it,” he added. “They compete to carry out martyrdom [suicide] operations.” Abu Ahmed and others say the FSA has lost fighters to al-Nusra in Aleppo, Hama, Idlib and Deir al-Zor and the Damascus region. Ala’ al-Basha, commander of the Sayyida Aisha brigade, warned the FSA chief of staff, General Salim Idriss, about the issue last month. Basha said 3,000 FSA men have joined al-Nusra in the last few months, mainly because of a lack of weapons and ammunition.”... “Al-Nusra has members serving undercover with FSA units so they can spot potential recruits, according to Abu Hassan of the FSA’s al-Tawhid Lions brigade.”... “Western governments say they are aware of the al-Nusra problem, which is being monitored by intelligence agencies, but they are uncertain about its extent.”

The Times of Israel, May 12, 2013:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-has-diplomatic-mission-in-unnamed-gulf-state/>

- “A Foreign Ministry economic plan for 2013-2014, to be submitted for cabinet approval this week, revealed that Israel has established a diplomatic mission in an unnamed state in the Persian Gulf, one of 11 new diplomatic missions set up in various states around the world since 2010.”

The Wall Street Journal, June 14, 2013:

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1000142412787324188604578543820387158806?mobile=y> – “President Barack Obama authorized his administration to provide arms to rebels fighting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, officials said Thursday”

Reuters, June 19, 2013:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/19/us-syria-rebels-islamists-specialreport-idUSBRE95I0BC20130619>

- “It’s a pattern repeated elsewhere in the country. During a 10-day journey through rebel-held territory in Syria, Reuters journalists found that radical Islamist units are sidelining more moderate groups that do not share the Islamists’ goal of establishing a supreme religious leadership in the country.”... “Many pledge allegiance to the notion of a unified Free Syrian Army (FSA). But on the ground there is little evidence to suggest the FSA actually exists as a body at all.”...

“So far the Islamist groups have been the ones to attract outside support, mostly from private Sunni Muslim backers in Saudi Arabia, according to fighters in Syria.”... “The moderates are losing ground. In many parts of rebel-held Aleppo, the red, black and green revolutionary flag which represents more moderate elements has been replaced with the black Islamic flag. Small shops selling black headbands, conservative clothing and black balaclavas have popped up around the city and their business is booming. Reuters met several Islamist fighters who had left more moderate rebel brigades for hardline groups. One member of Ahrar al-Sham, who would only speak on condition of anonymity, said: “I used to be with the Free Syrian Army but they were always thinking about what they wanted to do in future. I wanted to fight oppression now.”

The Telegraph, June 19, 2013:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10131063/Syrian-rebels-get-first-heavy-weapons-on-the-front-line-of-Aleppo.html>

- “Rebel sources said Russian-made “Konkurs” anti-tank missiles had been supplied by America’s key Gulf ally, Saudi Arabia. They have already been used to destructive effect and may have held up a promised regime assault on Aleppo. A handful of the missiles were already in use and in high demand after opposition forces looted them from captured regime bases. More have now arrived, confirming reports that the White House has lifted an unofficial embargo on its Gulf allies sending heavy weapons to the rebels.”... “We now have supplies from Saudi Arabia,” a rebel source said. “We have been told more weapons are on their way, even higher-end missiles.”

Los Angeles Times, June 21, 2013:

<http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jun/21/world/la-fg-wn-cia-syria-20130621>

- “White House officials refused to comment Friday on a Los Angeles Times report that CIA operatives and U.S. special operations troops have been secretly training Syrian rebels with anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons since late last year, saying only that the U.S. had increased its assistance to the rebellion. The covert U.S. training at bases in Jordan and Turkey began months before President Obama approved plans to begin

directly arming the opposition to Syrian President Bashar Assad, according to U.S. officials and rebel commanders.”... “U.S. officials said the Obama administration and its allies may supply anti-tank weapons to help the rebels destroy armored vehicles used by Assad forces. They are less likely to provide portable anti-aircraft missiles, which the rebels say they need to eliminate Assad’s warplanes. U.S. officials fear those missiles would fall into the hands of the Al Nusra front, the largest of the Islamist militias in the rebel coalition, which the U.S. regards as an Al Qaeda ally. Secretary of State John F. Kerry is heading to Qatar on Saturday and will talk with other governments backing the rebels. A senior State Department official told reporters Friday that the talks would include discussions about coordinating deliveries of military aid.”

Los Angeles Times, June 21, 2013:

<http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jun/21/world/la-fg-cia-syria-20130622>

- “CIA operatives and U.S. special operations troops have been secretly training Syrian rebels with anti-tank and antiaircraft weapons since late last year, months before President Obama approved plans to begin directly arming them, according to U.S. officials and rebel commanders. The covert U.S. training at bases in Jordan and Turkey, along with Obama’s decision this month to supply arms and ammunition to the rebels, has raised hope among the beleaguered Syrian opposition that Washington ultimately will provide heavier weapons as well.”... “The training began in November at a new American base in the desert in southwestern Jordan, he said. So far, about 100 rebels from Dara have attended four courses, and rebels from Damascus, the Syrian capital, have attended three, he said.”... “But arms shipments from Qatar, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, provided with assent from the Americans, took months to arrive and included less than the rebels had expected.”

Washington Times, June 27, 2013:

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/jun/27/syrians-behead-christians-helping-military-cia-shi/>

- “A priest and another Christian were beheaded before a cheering crowd by Syrian insurgents who say they aided and abetted the enemy, President Bashar Assad’s military, foreign media reported.”

The Times of Israel, July 1, 2013:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/we-have-no-beef-with-israel-syrian-islamist-rebel-group-says/>

- “A Syrian rebel group operating along the Israeli border in the Golan Heights said it has no quarrel with Israel, and that its fight is with President Bashar Assad, not the Jewish state — and it will remain that way.”

McClatchy, July 7, 2013:

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/middle-east/article24750766.html#.UdrydzvVBVI>

- “The election of new leadership by the umbrella coalition of Syrian opposition figures reflects an internal policy shift toward the influence of the United States and Saudi Arabia, according to insiders and policy analysts. On Saturday in Istanbul, the Syrian Opposition Coalition, the group that the United States has designated as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people, elected Ahmed Assi al Jarba, to lead the group. Jarba is described as a secular moderate with close tribal and political ties to Saudi Arabia.

New York Times, July 8, 2013:

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/09/world/middleeast/syria.html?_r=1

- The main Syrian exile opposition group suffered new turbulence at the top on Monday, when the prime minister of its still-notional interim government resigned. The resignation came two days after the opposition group elected a new president as it tries to unify and arm the rebels fighting the government of President Bashar al-Assad and to help civilians in rebel-held areas of Syria.”... “The prime minister, Ghassan Hitto, was appointed in March to assemble an administration that would govern rebel-held territory. It was not immediately clear why he resigned. But the opposition’s efforts to establish that administration and a unified military command, and to obtain greater military support from the West, remain nascent at best. The United States and its allies have pledged to increase aid, but so far there has been little apparent impact, and members of the coalition have complained that it is hard to make progress when the West is not fully committed to helping them.”... “Mr. Hitto, a naturalized American citizen from Damascus who lived in Texas for years, was seen by American officials as a capable technocrat. He helped manage the exile group’s humanitarian aid effort, visited rebel-held areas several times and urged his colleagues in the opposition group to visit as well.”

The Telegraph, July 31, 2013:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10215068/Wests-main-aid-group-for-Syrian-rebels-collapses-into-disarray.html>

- “Even as President Bashar al-Assad has made sweeping advances across parts of his country, the Syrian Support Group (SSG) has been riven by internal divisions and struggled to raise funds.”... “One former staff member has alleged that the leadership had become “obsessed” with landing a jackpot oil deal and lost sight of its core mission to back the rebels.”... “But private donations dried up after the US State Department warned the SSG that its funds could not be used for weapons. Instead according to David Falt, a whistleblower who served as SSG’s European government affairs director, the group turned its efforts from fundraising to pursuing large and controversial oil deals under the leadership of Brian Sayers, a former Nato official.”

Huffington Post, August 1, 2013:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-shank/how-arming-syrian-rebels_b_3689592.html

- “Arming one side of Syria’s multi-sided and bloody civil war will come back to haunt us. Past decisions by the U.S. to arm insurgencies in Libya, Angola, Central America and Afghanistan helped sustain brutal conflicts in those regions for decades. In the case of Afghanistan, arming the mujahideen in the 1980s created the instability that emboldened extreme militant groups and gave rise to the Taliban, which ultimately created an environment for al Qaeda to thrive.”...” Many of the approximately 17,000 anti-Assad fighters killed are simply trying to protect their families and communities from Assad’s murderous assaults. But when you lift the curtain on the armed groups with the most formidable military presence on the ground in Syria, you find the Al Nusra Front and Al Farough Brigades. Both groups are closely aligned with Al Qaeda and have directly perpetrated barbaric atrocities. The Al Nusra Front has been charged with beheadings of civilians, while a commander from the Al Farough Brigades reportedly ate the heart of a pro-Assad soldier.”

The Telegraph, August 2, 2013:

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/10218288/CI_A-running-arms-smuggling-team-in-Benghazi-when-consulate-was-attacked.html -

“Up to 35 CIA operatives were working in the city during the attack last September on the US consulate that resulted in the death of Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans, according to CNN.”... The television network said that a CIA team was working in an annex near the consulate on a project to supply missiles from Libyan armouries to Syrian rebels. Sources said that more Americans were hurt in the assault spearheaded by suspected Islamic radicals than had been previously reported. CIA chiefs were actively working to ensure the real nature of its operations in the city did not get out. So only the losses suffered by the State Department in the city had been reported to Congress.”

The Times of Israel, August 9, 2013:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-and-the-gulf-states-its-complicated/>

- “In February 2009, a few days after Israel concluded its Operation Cast Lead against Gaza terrorists, the chief of protocol at Qatar’s Foreign Ministry invited Roi Rosenblit, who at the time headed Israel’s interest office in Doha, for a meeting in his office.”... “Jerusalem is vocally advocating for stronger ties with the overwhelmingly Sunni Gulf states in the Gulf, hoping both for commercial opportunities and geo-strategic advantages. On July 18, the Israeli Foreign Ministry opened a Twitter channel exclusively “dedicated to promoting dialogue with the people of the GCC region.” The GCC, short for Cooperation Council of Arab States in the Gulf, includes Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait.”... “It is not difficult to figure out why the Gulf states would be interested in closer cooperation with Israel. Most importantly, the Jewish state is a regional superpower, widely assumed to possess an impressive nuclear arsenal, and has openly vowed to prevent Iran from acquiring such weapons. The Gulf states, some of which have decades-old territorial disputes with Tehran, are just as scared as Israel is of a nuclear-armed Iran.”

Reuters, August 21, 2013:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/21/us-syria-crisis-chemicals-russia-idUSBRE97K0SB20130821>

- “Russia’s Foreign Ministry called for a thorough investigation on Wednesday into reports that Syrian government forces had launched a chemical attack, suggesting that rebels could have staged the assault to provoke international action.”...

Jerusalem Post, August 23, 2013:

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Report-Syrian-rebel-forces-trained-by-West-are-moving-towards-Damascus-324033>

- “The rebels were trained for several months in a training camp on the Jordanian-Syrian border by CIA operatives, as well as Jordanian and Israeli commandos, the paper said.”

The Jerusalem Post, August 23, 2013:

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Report-Syrian-rebel-forces-trained-by-West-are-moving-towards-Damascus-324033> -

“Guerrilla fighters trained by the West began moving towards Damascus in mid-August, French newspaper Le Figaro reported on Thursday.”... “The rebels were trained for several months in a training camp on the Jordanian-Syrian border by CIA operatives, as well as Jordanian and Israeli commandos, the paper said.”

Channel 4 News (UK), August 24, 2013:

<http://blogs.channel4.com/alex-thomsons-view/syria-spooks-wikileaks-military/5502>

- “One Air Force intel guy (US) said very carefully that there isn’t much of a Free Syrian Army to train right now anyway, but all the operations being done now are being done out of ‘prudence’.”

Reuters, August 24, 2013:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/24/us-syria-crisis-jobar-idUSBRE97N04T20130824>

- “Syrian state television said government soldiers found chemical agents in rebel tunnels in the Damascus suburb of Jobar on Saturday and some of the troops were suffocating.”

The Independent, August 27, 2013:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/does-obama-know-hes-fighting-on-alqaidas-side-8786680.html>

- “If Barack Obama decides to attack the Syrian regime, he has ensured – for the very first time in history – that the United States will be on the same side as al-Qa’ida.”... “Maybe the Americans should ask al-Qa’ida for intelligence help – after all, this is the group with “boots on the ground”, something the Americans have no interest in doing. And maybe al-Qa’ida could offer some target information facilities to the country which usually claims that the supporters of al-Qa’ida, rather than the Syrians, are the most wanted men in the world.”

Mint Press News, August 29, 2013:

<http://www.mintpressnews.com/witnesses-of-gas-attack-say-saudis-supplied-rebels-with-chemical-weapons/168135/>

- “However, from numerous interviews with doctors, Ghouta residents, rebel fighters and their families, a different picture emerges. Many believe that certain rebels received chemical weapons via the Saudi intelligence chief, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, and were responsible for carrying out the dealing gas attack.”... “Ghouta townspeople said the rebels were using mosques and private houses to sleep while storing their weapons in tunnels.”... “More than a dozen rebels interviewed reported that their salaries came from the Saudi government.”

The Guardian, August 30, 2013:

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/earth-insight/2013/aug/30/syria-chemical-attack-war-intervention-oil-gas-energy-pipelines>

- “In May 2007, a presidential finding revealed that Bush had authorised CIA operations against Iran. Anti-Syria operations were also in full swing around this time as part of this covert programme, according to Seymour Hersh in the New Yorker. A range of US government and intelligence sources told him that the Bush administration had “cooperated with Saudi Arabia’s government, which is Sunni, in clandestine operations” intended to weaken the Shi’ite Hezbollah in Lebanon. “The US has also taken part in clandestine operations aimed at Iran and its ally Syria,” wrote Hersh, “a byproduct” of which is “the bolstering of Sunni extremist groups” hostile to the United States and “sympathetic to al-Qaeda.” He noted that “the Saudi government, with Washington’s approval, would provide funds and logistical aid to weaken the government of President Bashir Assad, of Syria,” with a view to pressure him to be “more conciliatory and open to negotiations” with Israel. One faction receiving covert US “political and financial support” through the Saudis was the exiled Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.”... “Leaked emails from the private intelligence firm Stratfor including notes from a meeting with

Pentagon officials confirmed US-UK training of Syrian opposition forces since 2011 aimed at eliciting “collapse” of Assad’s regime “from within.”... “Much of the strategy currently at play was candidly described in a 2008 US Army-funded RAND report, unfolding the Future of the Long War (pdf). The report noted that “the economies of the industrialized states will continue to rely heavily on oil, thus making it a strategically important resource.” As most oil will be produced in the Middle East, the US has “motive for maintaining stability in and good relations with Middle Eastern states”... “In this context, the report identified several potential trajectories for regional policy focused on protecting access to Gulf oil supplies, among which the following are most salient: *“Divide and Rule focuses on exploiting fault lines between the various Salafi-jihadist groups to turn them against each other and dissipate their energy on internal conflicts. This strategy relies heavily on covert action, information operations (IO), unconventional warfare, and support to indigenous security forces... the United States and its local allies could use the nationalist jihadists to launch proxy IO campaigns to discredit the transnational jihadists in the eyes of the local populace... US leaders could also choose to capitalize on the ‘Sustained Shia-Sunni Conflict’ trajectory by taking the side of the conservative Sunni regimes against Shiite empowerment movements in the Muslim world.... possibly supporting authoritative Sunni governments against a continuingly hostile Iran.”*... ”

“The report noted especially that Syria is among several “downstream countries that are becoming increasingly water scarce as their populations grow”, increasing a risk of conflict. Thus, although the RAND document fell far short of recognising the prospect of an ‘Arab Spring’, it illustrates that three years before the 2011 uprisings, US defence officials were alive to the region’s growing instabilities, and concerned by the potential consequences for stability of Gulf oil.”... These strategic concerns, motivated by fear of expanding Iranian influence, impacted Syria primarily in relation to pipeline geopolitics. In 2009 – the same year former French foreign minister Dumas alleges the British began planning operations in Syria – Assad refused to sign a proposed agreement with Qatar that would run a pipeline from the latter’s North field, contiguous with Iran’s South Pars field, through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and on to Turkey, with a view to supply European markets – albeit crucially bypassing Russia. Assad’s rationale was “to protect the interests of [his] Russian ally, which is Europe’s top supplier of natural gas.” Instead, the following year, Assad pursued negotiations for an alternative \$10 billion pipeline plan with Iran, across Iraq to Syria that would also potentially allow Iran to supply gas to Europe from its South Pars field shared with Qatar. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the project was signed in July 2012 – just as Syria’s civil war was spreading to Damascus and Aleppo – and earlier this year Iraq signed a framework agreement for construction of the gas pipelines. The Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline plan was a “direct slap in the face” to Qatar’s plans. No wonder Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan, in a failed attempt to bribe Russia to switch sides, told President Vladimir Putin that “whatever regime comes after” Assad, it will be “completely” in Saudi Arabia’s hands and will “not sign any agreement allowing any Gulf country to transport its gas across Syria to Europe and compete with Russian gas exports”, according to diplomatic sources. When Putin refused, the Prince vowed military action.”

The Telegraph, September 3, 2013:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10283758/First-Syria-rebels-armed-and-trained-by-CIA-on-way-to-battlefield.html>

- “During a meeting at the White House, the president assured Senator John McCain that after months of delay the US was meeting its commitment to back moderate elements of the opposition. Mr. Obama said that a 50-man cell, believed to have been trained by US special forces in Jordan, was making its way across the border into Syria, according to the New York Times.”

Reuters, September 7, 2013:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/07/us-syria-crisis-aipac-idUSBRE9860D420130907>

- “The influential pro-Israel American Israel Public Affairs Committee will deploy hundreds of activists next week to win support in Congress for military action in Syria, amid an intense White House effort to convince wavering U.S. lawmakers to vote for limited strikes.”

USA Today, September 8, 2013:

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/09/08/syrian-rebels-take-christian-village/2781763/>

- “Syrian rebels led by al-Qaida-linked fighters seized control of a predominantly Christian village northeast of Damascus”... “The prominence of al-Qaida-linked fighters has factored into the reluctance of Western powers to provide direct military support to the rebels.”... “Such concerns have helped Assad retain the support of large chunks of Syria’s minority communities, including Christians, Alawites, Druze and ethnic Kurds. Most of the rebels and their supporters are Sunni Muslims.”

Christian Science Monitor, September 8, 2013:

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2013/0908/As-Syria-s-war-rages-region-s-Christians-hold-their-breath>

- “Syrian rebels linked with Al Qaeda have reportedly taken over the historic Christian town of Maaloula, deepening concerns that without the protection of President Bashar al-Assad, Syria’s Christians, roughly 10 percent of the population, could be left vulnerable to mass emigration or persecution.”

Market Watch, September 10, 2013:

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/vietnam-911-and-now-syria-going-to-war-on-false-pretexts-2013-09-10>

- “as the 12th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks approaches, 12 former CIA, FBI, NSA, and US military officials — including Time Magazine’s 2002 person of the year, Colleen Rowley, and former CIA analyst Ray McGovern, who provided the daily brief for three presidents — say in an open letter to President Obama that the charge that President Assad used chemical weapons on August 21st is based on false intelligence.”

NBC News, September 10, 2013:

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/other/extremist-element-among-syrian-rebels-growing-worry-f8C11115141>

- “Debate is intensifying in Washington over the group that stands to reap the most immediate benefits from a U.S. military intervention in Syria — the Free Syrian Army, the leading alliance of rebel factions fighting to topple Bashar Assad. While the U.S. already is providing money, equipment, training and limited weaponry to the Free Syrian Army (FSA), some U.S. military officials are growing increasingly concerned about the presence of extremist Islamic groups within the overall force.”... “But a senior military official, also speaking on condition of anonymity, disagreed, claiming the percentage of

radical Islamic fighters is “way higher than that,” when the definition is expanded beyond the membership of the al Qaeda affiliates. He said Pentagon officials estimate that extreme Islamist groups now constitute “more than 50 percent” of the rebel force, “and it’s growing by the day.”... “Some FSA factions aren’t shy about advertising their radicalism, at least on some venues. An example is the al-Aqsa Islamic Brigades, a unit of the FSA, which posted an illustration of masked jihadis marching away from a burning U.S. Capitol on its Facebook page.”

Washington Post, September 11, 2013:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-begins-weapons-delivery-to-syrian-rebels/2013/09/11/9fcf2ed8-1b0c-11e3-a628-7e6dde8f889d_story.html -

“The CIA has begun delivering weapons to rebels in Syria, ending months of delay in lethal aid that had been promised by the Obama administration, according to U.S. officials and Syrian figures. The shipments began streaming into the country over the past two weeks, along with separate deliveries by the State Department of vehicles and other gear — a flow of material that marks a major escalation of the U.S. role in Syria’s civil war.”... “The CIA shipments are to flow through a network of clandestine bases in Turkey and Jordan that were expanded over the past year as the agency sought to help Middle Eastern allies, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar, direct weapons to moderate Syrian rebel forces.”

Mother Jones, September 12, 2013:

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/09/syrian-rebel-aid-handwritten-receipts>

- “In recent weeks, the Obama administration and hawks favoring a strike on Syria have called for the continued support of supposedly moderate rebels fighting Bashar al-Assad’s regime. The United States has been sending millions of dollars in nonlethal aid to the rebels since February, and in June President Obama authorized secretly supplying weapons to opposition fighters. But with hundreds of Syrian rebel groups battling the regime—ranging from the relatively moderate Free Syrian Army (FSA) to the Al Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusra Front—can the administration ensure that US aid is not winding up in the wrong hands?”... “Given the makeup of the Syrian opposition forces, there is a good chance that some US assistance could find its way into the wrong hands. There are up to 150,000 rebel fighters in Syria, some of whom are not affiliated with FSA, and at least 16 percent of the rebels are considered “radical,” according to the Syrian Support Group’s own estimate. “When I worked at the [CIA’s] counterterrorism center, for Iraq we estimated that Al Qaeda made up 8 percent of the insurgency,” says Peritz. “This is way worse—this means there are at least 15,000 extremists in Syria.”

Jerusalem Post, September 17, 2013:

<http://www.jpost.com/Syria-Crisis/Oren-Jerusalem-has-wanted-Assad-ousted-since-the-outbreak-of-the-Syrian-civil-war-326328> – ““Bad guys” backed by Iran are worse for Israel than “bad guys” who are not supported by the Islamic Republic, Israel’s outgoing ambassador to the US Michael Oren told The Jerusalem Post in a parting interview.”... “The initial message about the Syrian issue was that we always wanted [President] Bashar Assad to go, we always preferred the bad guys who weren’t backed by Iran to the bad guys who were backed by Iran,” he said.”... “We understand that they are pretty bad guys,” he said, adding that this designation did not apply to everyone in the Syrian opposition. “Still, the greatest danger to Israel is by the strategic arc that extends from Tehran, to Damascus to Beirut. And we saw the Assad regime as the

keystone in that arc. That is a position we had well before the outbreak of hostilities in Syria. With the outbreak of hostilities we continued to want Assad to go.”

Washington Post, September 18, 2013:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/al-qaeda-linked-fighters-seize-syrian-town-of-azaz-from-more-moderate-rebels/2013/09/18/113e0954-20ad-11e3-966c-9c4293c47ebe_story.html

- “Al-Qaeda-linked militants seized a key northern Syrian town from rebels on Wednesday, as mounting friction between anti-government extremists and more moderate, Western-backed opposition factions erupted into all-out conflict.”

New York Times, September 25, 2013:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/26/world/middleeast/syria-crisis.html?ref=world&r=2&>

- “As diplomats at the United Nations push for a peace conference to end Syria’s civil war, a collection of some of the country’s most powerful rebel groups have publicly abandoned the opposition’s political leaders, casting their lot with an affiliate of Al Qaeda. As support for the Western-backed leadership has dwindled, a second, more extreme Al Qaeda group has carved out footholds across parts of Syria, frequently clashing with mainline rebels who accuse it of making the establishment of an Islamic state a priority over the fight to topple President Bashar al-Assad.”...

The Times of Israel, October 2, 2013:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-gulf-states-said-discussing-new-alliance-to-stop-iran/>

- “Israel has held a series of meetings with prominent figures from a number of Gulf and other Arab states in recent weeks in an attempt to muster a new alliance capable of blocking Iran’s drive toward nuclear weapons, Israel’s Channel 2 reported Wednesday.”... “A number of Sunni countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, have been vocally opposed to Iran’s nuclear program, placing them and Israel on the same side of the debate.”

Public Accountability Initiative, October 11, 2013:

<http://public-accountability.org/2013/10/conflicts-of-interest-in-the-syria-debate/>

- “The media debate surrounding the question of whether to launch a military attack on Syria in August and September of 2013 was dominated by defense industry-backed experts and think tanks. These individuals and organizations are linked to dozens of defense and intelligence contractors, defense-focused investment firms, and diplomatic consulting firms with strong defense ties, yet these business ties were rarely disclosed on air or in print. This report brings transparency to these largely undocumented and undisclosed connections.”

Yahoo, November 25, 2013:

<http://finance.yahoo.com/blogs/daily-ticker/want-cut-government-waste-8-5-trillion-pentagon-142321339.html>

- “Special Enterprise Reporter Scot Paltrow unearthed the “high cost of the Pentagon’s bad bookkeeping” in a Reuters investigation. It amounts to \$8.5 trillion in taxpayer money doled out by Congress to the Pentagon since 1996 that has never been accounted for.”

Reuters, December 14, 2013:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/14/us-syria-crisis-rebels-idUSBRE9BD08D20131214>

- “Syrian rebel commanders from the Islamic Front which seized control of bases belonging to Western-backed rebels last week are due to hold talks with U.S. officials in Turkey in coming days, rebel and opposition sources said on Saturday.”

The National, December 28, 2013:

<http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/syrian-rebels-get-arms-and-advice-through-secret-command-centre-in-amman#full>

- “A secret operations command centre in Jordan, staffed by western and Arab military officials, has given vital support to rebels fighting on Syria’s southern front, providing them with weapons and tactical advice on attacking regime targets.”... “However, according to opposition figures, the command centre – known as “the operations room” – is a well-run operation staffed by high-ranking military officials from 14 countries, including the US, European nations and Arabian Gulf states, the latter providing the bulk of materiel and financial support to rebel factions.”

Foreign Policy, December 17, 2013:

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/12/17/u-s-weighing-closer-ties-with-hardline-islamists-in-syria/#sthash.vGadKsye.oeJLihrk.dpbs>

- “As the moderate faction of the Syrian rebellion implodes under the strain of vicious infighting and diminished resources, the United States is increasingly looking to hard-line Islamists in its efforts to gain leverage in Syria’s civil war. The development has alarmed U.S. observers concerned that the radical Salafists do not share U.S. values and has dismayed supporters of the Free Syrian Army who believe the moderates were set up to fail.”... “On Monday, the State Department confirmed its openness to engaging with the Islamic Front following the group’s seizure of a Free Syrian Army headquarters last week containing U.S.-supplied small arms and food. “We wouldn’t rule out the possibility of meeting with the Islamic Front,” State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said Monday. “We can engage with the Islamic Front, of course, because they’re not designated terrorists. We’re always open to meeting with a wide range of opposition groups. Obviously, it may make sense to do so at some point soon, and if we have something to announce, we will.”... “Soon after its creation, the Islamic Front signed a charter that made it clear the group aimed to create a Sunni theocracy, not a Western-style democracy. The document rejected the prospect of any sort of representative government, arguing that in Islam, only “God is the sovereign.” It explicitly rejects secularism as “contradictory to Islam,” and argues that Syria’s ethnic and religious minorities can be protected on the basis of Islamic law. Some of the comments from the Islamic Front’s top leaders support the contention that the group’s ideology comes dangerously close to that of al Qaeda though the front is not aligned with the terrorist network.”

The Telegraph, January 21, 2014:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10588308/US-secretly-backs-rebels-to-fight-al-Qaeda-in-Syria.html>

- “The United States and Gulf countries have been secretly backing efforts by opposition rebels to destroy al-Qaeda’s most extreme wing in Syria, diplomats and rebels involved in the plan have told The Telegraph.”... “One source said the US was itself handing out millions of dollars to rebel groups best equipped to take on the extremists while another confirmed America was providing non-lethal aid.”... “The Syrian Revolutionary Front,

whose main commander, Jamal Maarouf, is allied to Saudi Arabia, and the Army of Islam, a new coalition of the moderate rebels sponsored by Qatar, have continued to liaise with the CIA and Saudi and Qatari intelligence, others close to meetings said.”... “Washington did not directly give arms, he said, but backed Saudi Arabia in its funding of the groups. The United States has, however, also been giving \$2 million in cash every month as an unofficial hand out, splitting that amount between western friendly rebel groups, the source added.”

Foreign Affairs (CFR), January 23, 2014:

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2014-01-23/good-and-bad-ahrar-al-sham>

- “The Good and Bad of Ahrar al-Sham, An al Qaeda–Linked Group Worth Befriending”

New York Times, January 28, 2014:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/29/world/middleeast/rebels-in-syria-claim-control-of-resources.html>

- “Islamist rebels and extremist groups have seized control of most of Syria’s oil and gas resources, a rare generator of cash in the country’s war-battered economy, and are now using the proceeds to underwrite their fights against one another as well as President Bashar al-Assad, American officials say. While the oil and gas fields are in serious decline, control of them has bolstered the fortunes of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, and the Nusra Front, both of which are offshoots of Al Qaeda.”

Vice, February 4, 2014:

<http://www.vice.com/read/syrias-christian-minority-are-fighting-back2>

- “Sutoro, the name the organization goes under, means “police” in Syriac, the language of the Assyrian Christians of the area—the Hasakah Governorate in the northeast of the country. The group has been described as a Christian militia, but it’s really a neighborhood watch, albeit with arrest powers and automatic weapons. Its members patrol the streets of Qahtaniya, Al-Malikiyah and Qamishli, towns and cities where people—mostly Kurds, but also Christians and Sunni Arabs—are locked in a brutal struggle against Islamist militants, some of them with ties to al Qaeda.”

Haaretz, February 24, 2014:

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/.premium-1.576083>

- “U.S., Saudi Arabia and Jordan are reportedly helping rebels plan attack starting in south and spreading to Damascus.”... “According to reports in the Syrian media and on websites run by the opposition, Jordan is replacing – or perhaps has already replaced – Turkey as the rebels’ new base of operations.”... Meanwhile, the United States is constructing runways for reconnaissance aircraft near the border between Jordan and Syria, and in recent weeks Saudi Arabia has flown weaponry and ammunition purchased in Ukraine to bases in Jordan.”

The Jewish Press, February 24, 2014:

<http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/report-commander-of-syrian-rebels-trained-in-israel/2014/02/24/>

- “Abdul-Ilah al-Bashir, the new commander of the Free Syrian Army, secretly trained in Israel last year after being admitted into to the country for medical treatment, according to the Arabic language Al-Ahd website. He was transferred to a hospital in Israel after he was wounded in a military operation. Rumors spread that he died and was buried in Syria, allegedly to distract attention from his training in Israel.”

Reuters, March 9, 2014:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/09/us-iraq-saudi-qatar-idUSBREA2806S20140309>

- “Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has accused Saudi Arabia and Qatar of openly funding the Sunni Muslim insurgents his troops are battling in western Anbar province, in his strongest such statement since fighting started there early this year.”

Haaretz, March 16, 2014:

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.580169>

- “The Syrian opposition is willing to give up claims to the Golan Heights in return for cash and Israeli military aid against President Bashar Assad, a top opposition official told Al Arab newspaper, according to a report in Al Alam.”

New York Times, March 24, 2014:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/25/world/middleeast/arms-airlift-to-syrian-rebels-expands-with-cia-aid.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

- “With help from the C.I.A., Arab governments and Turkey have sharply increased their military aid to Syria’s opposition fighters in recent months, expanding a secret airlift of arms and equipment for the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad”... “Although rebel commanders and the data indicate that Qatar and Saudi Arabia had been shipping military materials via Turkey to the opposition since early and late 2012”... “Simultaneously, arms and equipment were being purchased by Saudi Arabia in Croatia and flown to Jordan on Jordanian cargo planes for rebels working in southern Syria and for retransfer to Turkey for rebels groups operating from there, several officials said.”

Pakistan Today, March 29, 2014:

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2014/03/29/foreign/obama-meets-abdullah-considering-sending-manpads-to-syrian-rebels/>

- “President Barack Obama is considering allowing shipments of new air defense systems to the Syrian opposition, a US official said, as Obama sought to reassure Saudi Arabia’s king that the US is not taking too soft a stance in Syria and other Mideast conflicts.”

PRI, April 1, 2014:

<http://www.pri.org/stories/2014-04-01/one-toyota-pickup-truck-top-shopping-list-free-syrian-army-and-taliban>

- “The Hilux, a pickup truck Toyota has built since the late 1960s, isn’t available in the US, but it’s popular around the globe, including with insurgent groups such as the Taliban, al-Qaeda and Boko Haram.”... “Recently, when the US State Department resumed sending non-lethal aid to Syrian rebels, the delivery list included 43 Toyota trucks. Hiluxes were on the Free Syrian Army’s wish list. Oubai Shahbander, a Washington-based advisor to the Syrian National Coalition, is a fan of the truck.”

The Independent, April 2, 2014:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/i-am-not-fighting-against-alqaeda-its-not-our-problem-says-wests-last-hope-in-syria-9233424.html>

- “The rebel leader touted as the West’s last hope to stem the tide of extreme jihadist groups in Syria has said he will not fight against al-Qa’ida, and openly admits to battling alongside them. Speaking from a safe house on the outskirts of the Turkish town of Antakya, Jamal Maarouf, the leader of the Syrian Revolutionary Front (SRF) told The Independent that the fight against al-Qa’ida was “not our problem” and admitted his

fighters conduct joint operations with Jabhat al-Nusra – the official al-Qa'ida branch in Syria.”

Washington Post, April 14, 2013:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/us-feeds-syrians-but-secretly/2013/04/14/bfbc0ba6-a3b3-11e2-bd52-614156372695_story.html -

“To circumvent the shortfall, the United States has earmarked \$90 million of its contribution for nongovernmental organizations to operate in rebel areas, making it the largest Western donor of aid to the parts of Syria that have slipped beyond government control.”

Time Magazine, April 21, 2014:

<http://time.com/68336/syria-obama-anti-aircraft-missiles/>

- “A former CIA director has called them “our worst nightmare.” A 2005 study found that just one could blow a \$15 billion hole in the world economy. And the Obama Administration is thinking about sending them to Syria. They are shoulder-fired antiaircraft missiles, capable of knocking helicopters and low-flying planes out of the sky. Syria’s rebels and their Arab government backers insist those weapons could decisively reverse the momentum in Syria’s three-year civil war, which may recently have shifted in favor of Bashar Assad’s regime.”

PBS, May 26, 2014:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/foreign-affairs-defense/syria-arming-the-rebels/syrian-rebels-describe-u-s-backed-training-in-qatar/>

- “With reports indicating that forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Assad are gaining ground in that country’s brutal civil war, moderate Syrian rebels have told a visiting journalist that the United States is arranging their training in Qatar. In a documentary to be aired Tuesday night, the rebels describe their clandestine journey from the Syrian battlefield to meet with their American handlers in Turkey and then travel on to Qatar, where they say they received training in the use of sophisticated weapons and fighting techniques, including, one rebel said, “how to finish off soldiers still alive after an ambush.”... “The weapons are believed to have come from Saudi Arabia, but experts on international arms transfers have told McClatchy that they could not have been given to the rebels without the approval of the Obama administration.”... “Moderate rebel groups have worked closely with the al Qaida-aligned Nusra Front and the Islamic Front, one of whose factions, Ahrar al Sham, includes al Qaida members among its founders.”

Foreign Policy, June 11, 2014:

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/06/11/exclusive-israel-is-tending-to-wounded-syrian-rebels/>

- “Israel is quietly cultivating ties with moderate Syrian rebel groups operating along the country’s U.N.-monitored cease-fire line with Syria, providing medical care and other unidentified supplies to the insurgents”... “Once in Israel, they receive medical treatment in a field clinic before being sent back to Syria, where, presumably, some will return to carry on the fight.”... “The Israeli government has been providing medical assistance to Syria’s wounded for more than a year”

International Business Times, June 11, 2014:

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/mosul-seized-jihadis-loot-429m-citys-central-bank-make-isis-worlds-richest-terror-force-1452190>

- “The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Shams (Isis) has become the richest terror group ever after looting 500 billion Iraqi dinars – the equivalent of \$429m (£256m) – from Mosul’s central bank, according to the regional governor. Nineveh governor Atheel al-Nujaifi confirmed Kurdish television reports that Isis militants had stolen millions from numerous banks across Mosul. A large quantity of gold bullion is also believed to have been stolen.”

Irish Times, June 12, 2014:

<http://wwwirishtimescom/news/world/middle-east/iraq-army-capitulates-toisis-militants-in-four-cities-1.1828973>

- “Iraq is facing its gravest test since the US-led invasion more than a decade ago, after its army capitulated to Islamist insurgents who have seized four cities and pillaged military bases and banks, in a lightning campaign which seems poised to fuel a cross-border insurgency endangering the entire region. The extent of the Iraqi army’s defeat at the hands of militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Isis) became clear yesterday when officials in Baghdad conceded that insurgents had stripped the main army base in the northern city of Mosul of weapons, released hundreds of prisoners from the city’s jails and may have seized up to \$480 million in banknotes from the city’s banks. Iraqi officials said two divisions of Iraqi soldiers – roughly 30,000 men – simply turned and ran in the face of the assault by an insurgent force of just 800 fighters.”

The Independent, June 12, 2014:

<http://wwwindependentcouk/voices/iraq-crisis-sunni-caliphate-has-been-bankrolled-by-saudi-arabia-9533396.html>

- “So after the grotesquerie of the Taliban and Osama bin Laden and 15 of the 19 suicide killers of 9/11, meet Saudi Arabia’s latest monstrous contribution to world history: the Islamist Sunni caliphate of Iraq and the Levant, conquerors of Mosul and Tikrit – and Raqqa in Syria – and possibly Baghdad, and the ultimate humiliators of Bush and

Obama."..."The story of Iraq and the story of Syria are the same – politically, militarily and journalistically: two leaders, one Shia, the other Alawite, fighting for the existence of their regimes against the power of a growing Sunni Muslim international army. While the Americans support the wretched Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and his elected Shia government in Iraq, the same Americans still demand the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad of Syria and his regime, even though both leaders are now brothers-in-arms against the victors of Mosul and Tikrit."

Hurriyet Daily News, June 13, 2014:

<http://www.hurriyedailynews.com/chp-lawmakers-accuse-turkish-government-of-protecting-isil-and-al-nusra-militants.aspx?pageID=238&nID=67750&NewsCatID=338>

– “Two lawmakers from the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) have accused the government of protecting and cooperating with jihadist militants of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the al-Nusra Front, while the Turkish government quickly denied the claim.”

ABC News (Australian), June 13, 2014:

<http://www.news.com.au/world/iraqi-sunni-insurgents-seize-huge-cache-of-usmade-arms-and-equipment/story-fndir2ev-1226952811362>

- “The Iraq government forces abandoned their arms and ammunition as they fled the horde of Sunni gunmen streaming into the war-torn nation’s second largest city earlier this week. Most of that equipment was supplied by the United States. It was supposed to give Iraqi government forces a technological edge over their tribesman opponents as US troops withdrew following their 2003 invasion. Much of that edge is now in enemy hands.

Al-Monitor, June 13, 2014:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ar/business/2014/06/turkey-syria-isis-selling-smuggled-oil.html#>

- “The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) has been selling smuggled Syrian oil in Turkey worth \$800 million, according to Ali Ediboglu, a lawmaker for the border province of Hatay from the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP).”... “They transfer the oil to Turkey and parlay it into cash. They take the oil from the refineries at zero cost. Using primitive means, they refine the oil in areas close to the Turkish border and then sell it via Turkey. This is worth \$800 million.”

The Daily Beast, June 14, 2014:

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/06/14/america-s-allies-are-funding-isis.html>

- “The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), now threatening Baghdad, was funded for years by wealthy donors in Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, three U.S. allies that have dual agendas in the war on terror.”... “But in the years they were getting started, a key component of ISIS’s support came from wealthy individuals in the Arab Gulf States of Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.”... “Gulf donors support ISIS, the Syrian branch of al Qaeda called the al Nusrah Front, and other Islamic groups fighting on the ground in Syria because they feel an obligation to protect Sunnis suffering under the atrocities of the Assad regime. Many of these backers don’t trust or like the American backed moderate opposition”...

The Guardian, June 15, 2014:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/15/iraq-isis-arrest-jihadists-wealth-power>

- “The capitulation of the military and the rapid advances of the insurgents have dramatically changed the balance of power in Iraq, crippled prime minister Nouri al-Maliki, allowed Kurdish forces to seize control of the disputed city of Kirkuk and galvanised a Shia fightback along sectarian lines, posing a serious threat to the region’s fragile geopolitics. On Sunday Isis published photographs that appeared to show it capturing and killing dozens of Iraqi soldiers. “By the end of the week, we soon realised that we had to do some accounting for them,” said the official flippantly. “Before Mosul, their total cash and assets were \$875m [£515m]. Afterwards, with the money they robbed from banks and the value of the military supplies they looted, they could add another \$1.5bn to that.”... “The scale of Isis’s resources seems to have prepared it for the improbable. But even by its ruthless standards, occupying two major cities in Iraq in three days, holding on to parts of Falluja and Ramadi, and menacing Kirkuk and Samara, was quite an accomplishment.”

The Guardian, June 16, 2014:

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/earth-insight/2014/jun/16/blowback-isis-iraq-manufactured-oil-addiction>

- “The meteoric rise of Isis is a predictable consequence of a longstanding US-led geostrategy in the Middle East that has seen tyrants and terrorists as tools to expedite access to regional oil and gas resources. Since the second world war, as British historian Mark Curtis documented extensively in his seminal study, *The Ambiguities of Power*, US and UK goals in the Middle East have focused on oil. As a secret British document from 1958 explained: “*The major British and other western interests in the Persian Gulf [are] (a) to ensure free access for Britain and other Western countries to oil produced in States bordering the Gulf; (b) to ensure the continued availability of that oil on favourable terms and for surplus revenues of Kuwait; (c) to bar the spread of Communism and pseudo-Communism in the area and subsequently to defend the area against the brand of Arab nationalism.*”...

“While Saddam Hussein was fighting Iran abroad, not to mention gassing Kurds and Shi’ites at home using the vast quantities of chemical and biological weapons sold to him by the US, Britain, France, Germany, among others, he was our man: In 1988, when Saddam’s forces were strafing Halabja with mustard gas and nerve toxins, massacring 5,000 civilians, US imports of Iraqi oil had rocketed to 126 million barrels – essentially one out of every four barrels of Iraqi oil exports. This was a special relationship. US oil companies received a discount of \$1 per barrel below prices charged to European companies.”... “Stratfor warned presciently that: “The new government’s attempts to establish control over all of Iraq may well lead to a civil war between Sunni, Shia and Kurdish ethnic groups... The fiercest fighting could be expected for control over the oil facilities” – exactly the scenario unfolding now.”... “both the Bush and Obama administration have – through Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Gulf states – fostered extremist Sunni groups affiliated to al-Qaida across the Middle East to counter Iranian influence.”

International Business Times, June 16, 2014:

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/iraq-crisis-are-isis-execution-photos-fake-1452833>

- “Gruesome pictures posted on Twitter by militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isis) may not be authentic, according to human rights activists.”... “The quality of these images raises doubts: the colour seems too good, the quantity of pixels

is above expectation and exposure is accurate,” she wrote. The composition of the images also suggests that the maker “had some kind of visual training in making pictures and editing them”. “We should be doubtful about the provenance of the images,” she concluded.”

Arutz Sheva, June 18, 2014:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/181886#.VdyHGJfnhqw>

– “The radical Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) has seized control of Iraq’s largest oil refinery, as the Shia-led government makes a desperate push to keep them from the capital Baghdad.”

DW News, June 19, 2014:

<http://www.dw.com/en/who-finances-isis/a-17720149>

- “During its conquest of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, ISIS fighters looted more than 500 billion Iraqi Dinar, worth about \$420 million (308 million euros) at current exchange rates. ISIS is a rebel army composed of Sunni jihadis that calls itself the “Islamic State of Iraq and greater Syria.” Its aim is to establish a theocratic Sunni caliphate in the region. Iraqi officials estimate that the group now has about \$2 billion in its war chest. What remains controversial is where the bulk of its money comes from. Iraq’s Shiite-dominated government accuses Saudi Arabia of supporting the ISIS jihadis. On Tuesday (17.06.2014), Iraqi Premier Nouri al-Maliki said “we hold Saudi Arabia responsible” for the financial and moral support given to ISIS.”... “Günter Meyer is Director of the Center for Research into the Arabic World at the University of Mainz. Meyer says he has no doubt about where ISIS gets its funding.

“The most important source of ISIS financing to date has been support coming out of the Gulf states, primarily Saudi Arabia but also Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates,” Meyer told Deutsche Welle. The Gulf states’ motivation in financing groups like ISIS was to support their fight against the regime of President Bashar al Assad in Syria, according to Meyer. Three quarters of the Syrian population are Sunni Muslims, but Syria is ruled by an elite drawn mostly from the Alawite minority. The Alawites are an offshoot of Shiite Islam.”... “Additional key financing sources for ISIS, according to Meyer, are the oil fields of northern Syria. “ISIS was able to get those oil fields under their control. They use trucks to bring oil over the border into Turkey. That’s an important source of funding for them.”... “ISIS’ biggest financial coup so far was no doubt the looting of the central bank in Mosul, which brought them the equivalent of about \$429 million in cash.”

Al-Arabiya News, June 22, 2014:

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/06/22/NGO-Syria-jihadists-now-using-Humvees-seized-in-Iraq-.html>

- “Jihadists fighting in Syria’s war put to use for the first time on Sunday American-made Humvees that they seized during a lightening offensive in Iraq this month, a monitor said. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, used the armored vehicles to capture the villages of Eksar and Maalal in Aleppo province, which borders Turkey, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.”

The Telegraph, June 25, 2014:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/al-qaeda/10925602/Al-Qaeda-merges-with-Isis-at-Syria-Iraq-border-town.html>

- “Al-Qaeda’s Syrian offshoot has issued a loyalty pledge to Isis at a remote town on the Iraqi border, a monitor said.”... “After months of clashes between the two sides, al-Qaeda’s official Syrian arm the al-Nusra Front “pledged loyalty to Isis” in Albu Kamal, said Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman.”

BBC News, June 26, 2014:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28042309>

- “President Barack Obama has asked the US Congress to approve \$500m (£294m) to train and equip what he described as “moderate” Syrian opposition forces.”...” Tens of thousands of people have died and millions more have been displaced in three years of civil war in Syria”

Washington Post, June 26, 2014:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/obama-backs-us-military-training-for-syrian-rebels/2014/06/26/ead59104-fd62-11e3-932c-0a55b81f48ce_story.html?wpisrc=al_comboPN

- “The Obama administration asked Congress on Thursday to authorize \$500 million in direct U.S. military training and equipment for Syrian opposition fighters, a move that could significantly escalate U.S. involvement in Syria’s civil war. Money for the assistance, which would expand a CIA covert training program, is included in a \$65.8 billion request for the Pentagon’s Overseas Contingency Operations, or OCO.”

Business Insider, June 27, 2014:

<http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-funding-us-allies-2014-6>

-“But the group is also receiving private donations from wealthy Sunnis in American-allied Gulf nations such as Kuwait, Qatar, and, possibly, Saudi Arabia.”... In Kuwait, donors have taken advantage of weak terror financing control laws to funnel hundreds of millions of dollars to various Syrian rebel groups, including ISIS, according to a December 2013 report by The Brookings Institution, which receives some funding from the government of Qatar.”...

Middle East Monitor, July 2, 2014:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/12505-official-isis-is-selling-iraqi-oil>

- “The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) has started selling oil extracted from wells close to the Hamrin Mountains, the head official in Tuzhurmatu, in the northern Iraqi province of Salahuddin, said.”

Arutz Sheva, July 3, 2014:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/182482#.VdyHLJfnhqw>

- “The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) continues to roll forward, adding to its collection of captured resources the Al-Omar Oil Field, the largest oil field in Syria located in the eastern Deir al-Zour province of the war-torn country, near the Iraqi border. The Islamist group has already amassed great assets during its blitz offensive in Iraq, seizing Iraq’s largest oil refinery, a chemical weapons facility, and becoming the “world’s richest terrorist organization” by looting 500 billion Iraqi dinars (\$425 million) from banks in Mosul.”

Arutz Sheva, July 5, 2014:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/182534#.VdyHMZfnhqw>

- “Jihadists from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) seized an eastern Syrian oil field near Iraq and inched closer to the Turkish border on Friday, The Associated Press (AP) reported. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that fighters from the group seized the al-Tanak oil field early Friday. Another group, the activist collective of Deir el-Zour, also reported the seizure. The field is in the eastern Syrian province of Deir el-Zour, near Iraq, and it followed the group’s seizure of Syria’s largest oil field on Thursday. Both oil fields were taken from other rebel groups.”

Al-Arabiya News, July 5, 2014:

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/07/05/ISIS-destroys-Shiite-mosques-shrines-in-Iraq.html>

- “Jihadists who overran Mosul last month have demolished ancient shrines and mosques in and around the historic northern Iraqi city, residents and social media posts said Saturday.”

The Guardian, July 6, 2014:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/06/abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-isis>

- “For a man so mysterious that there are only two known photographs of him, it was a brazen public debut. The most wanted man in the Middle East, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is also one of the most elusive, an evanescent figure behind the Islamist insurrection sweeping the Syrian and Iraqi interior.”...”Six months in detention was a major step in his transformation from devout Muslim to committed jihadist. However, it was another four years before he would assume the leadership of the movement, taking over from Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, who was killed in a US-led raid near Falluja.”

Iraq Oil Report, July 9, 2014:

<http://www.iraqoilreport.com/security/energy-sector/isis-earning-1-million-per-day-iraqi-oil-smuggling-12657/>

- “Since invading huge swaths of northern and central Iraq, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) has been smuggling increasing amounts of crude scavenged from Iraq’s stricken oil infrastructure to buyers in the Kurdistan region, earning the extremist group an estimated \$1 million per day.”

Mother Jones, July 11, 2014:

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/07/was-camp-bucca-pressure-cooker-extremism>

- “In short order, Baghdadi has become Iraq’s most prominent extremist leader. But for much of his adult life, Baghdadi did not have a reputations as a fiery, jihadist trailblazer. According to the Telegraph, members of his local mosque in Tobchi (a neighborhood in Baghdad) who knew him from around 1989 until 2004 (when he was between the ages of 18 and 33) considered Baghdadi a quiet, studious fellow and a talented soccer player. When the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, Baghdadi was earning a degree in Islamic studies in Baghdad. But within a couple years of the US invasion, Baghdadi was a prisoner in Camp Bucca, the US-run detainment facility in Umm Qasr, Iraq.”... “The details of Baghdadi’s time in Camp Bucca are murky. Some media reports note that he was held as a “civilian internee” at the prison for 10 months in 2004. Others report that he was captured by US forces in 2005 and spent four years at Camp Bucca. The reason why he was apprehended is not publicly known; he could have been arrested on a specific charge or as part of a large sweep of insurgents or insurgent supporters.”

The Sacramento Bee, July 12, 2014:

<http://www.sacbee.com/news/nation-world/article2603657.html>

- “One week after radical Islamists in Iraq declared a “Caliphate” spanning the Iraqi-Syria border with its capital in Mosul, Al Qaida’s affiliate in Syria, Jabhat al Nusra, said it is setting up an “Emirate” in besieged rebel-held parts of Aleppo.”... “Baghdadi had supported the Nusra movement after its founding in early 2012, providing manpower and weapons. But in April 2013, he announced the creation of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, which he said would supersede Nusra. Jolani rejected the takeover, and re-established Nusra, and by early this year the two extremist groups were engaged in armed clashes. Jolani’s statement Friday appeared to be an attempt to head off defections to Baghdad’s Islamic State. In critical towns along Syria’s border with Iraq, Nusra fighters have switched sides and joined the Islamic State.”

The Independent, July 13, 2014:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/iraq-crisis-how-saudi-arabia-helped-isis-take-over-the-north-of-the-country-9602312.html>

- “How far is Saudi Arabia complicit in the Isis takeover of much of northern Iraq, and is it stoking an escalating Sunni-Shia conflict across the Islamic world? Some time before 9/11, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, once the powerful Saudi ambassador in Washington and head of Saudi intelligence until a few months ago, had a revealing and ominous conversation with the head of the British Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, Sir Richard Dearlove. Prince Bandar told him: “The time is not far off in the Middle East, Richard, when it will be literally ‘God help the Shia’. More than a billion Sunnis have simply had enough of them.”... “He does not doubt that substantial and sustained funding from private donors in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, to which the authorities may have turned a blind eye, has played a central role in the Isis surge into Sunni areas of Iraq. He said: “Such things simply do not happen spontaneously.”... “There is nothing conspiratorial or secret about these links: 15 out of 19 of the 9/11 hijackers were Saudis, as was Bin Laden and most of the private donors who funded the operation.”... “The West may have to pay a price for its alliance with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies, which have always found Sunni jihadism more attractive than democracy. A striking example of double standards by the western powers was the Saudi-backed suppression of peaceful democratic protests by the Shia majority in Bahrain in March 2011. Some 1,500 Saudi troops were sent across the causeway to the island kingdom as the demonstrations were ended with great brutality and Shia mosques and shrines were destroyed.”

McClatchy, June 14, 2014:

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/middle-east/article24770476.html>

- “Iraqi and U.S. officials have confirmed that fighters allied with the Islamic State not only captured hundreds of U.S.-supplied Humvees and large amounts of ammunition in their march across Iraq, but they also now possess as many as 52 U.S.-supplied artillery pieces with GPS aiming systems. The 155mm guns have a range of 20 miles, putting many Iraqi cities still in government hands easily within range of Islamic State positions.”... Of more use, he said, would be the 52 155mm M198 howitzers that have apparently fallen into Islamic State hands. The guns, which cost more than \$500,000 each, can fire two rounds every minute, and while Binnie said he doubted that the Islamists would be able to learn how to fire them with pinpoint accuracy quickly, he said, “They shouldn’t have too much trouble shelling large area targets like a city if they have sufficient ammo.” Among the weapons that fell to the Islamic State also were 4,000 PKC

machine guns, a heavy belt-fed weapon that's been standard for combat forces since the Vietnam War and can fire as many as 800 rounds a minute."

Washington Post, July 19, 2014:

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/jul/19/christians-flee-mosul-after-isil-threat-convert-is/>

- "Christians in Iraq are heeding an ultimatum by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant to convert to Islam, get out or be killed. Reports from the Middle East say that large numbers of Christians have fled the northern city of Mosul — now under control of the ISIL — after a message warning them to get out by Saturday was broadcast by loudspeakers on the city's mosques."

Al-Arabiya News, July 19, 2014:

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/07/19/270-Syrian-fighters-killed-in-biggest-ISIS-operation-.html>

- "The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is now in control of 35 percent of the Syrian territory following a string of victories, the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Friday."

DW News, July 21, 2014:

<http://www.dw.com/en/isis-militants-take-over-christian-monastery-in-iraq/a-17799069>

- "Fighters with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) stormed the Saint Behnam monastery on Monday, located 30 kilometers (20 miles) southeast of Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city. News agency AFP quoted a cleric who heard the militants saying, "You have no place here anymore; you have to leave immediately." The monks were reportedly forced to abandon all their possessions and leave the monastery with nothing except the clothes they were wearing."

Al-Jazeera, July 22, 2014:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/last-remaining-christians-flee-iraq-mosul-201472118235739663.html> - "The last remaining Christians now have fled Mosul after Islamic State militants issued an ultimatum giving them until noon on July 19, the option to convert to Islam, pay a tax, leave, or be killed if they stayed."... "In 2003, it was thought that Christians in Mosul numbered 35,000. The number dwindled due to a wave of migration. Some estimates put the most recent numbers at 3,000 Christians out of a city of 2 million people. Before the ultimatum, Michael says only a few hundred Christian families remained in the city."

The Guardian, July 24, 2014:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/24/iraqi-christians-mosul-isis-convert-islam-or-be-executed>

- "Iraqi Christians who were forced to flee the northern city of Mosul under threat of forced conversion or execution by jihadists have spoken of their terror as churches were turned into mosques and their homes and property confiscated. The expulsion of one of the world's oldest Christian communities provoked condemnation and anguish from figures as diverse as the pope and Iraq's prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, who lambasted the Islamic State (Isis) for its "criminality and terrorism"."

CNN, July 25, 2014:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/07/24/world/iraq-violence/index.html>

- "If you blink during the video, you might miss the moment an explosion destroys what is said to have been the tomb of Jonah, a key figure in Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

The first few frames show the revered shrine towering over its landscape. Then comes a sudden burst of dust, fire and smoke. Then, nothing. Militants with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, planted explosives around the tomb and detonated them remotely Thursday, civil defense officials there told CNN.”

Jerusalem Post, July 30, 2014:

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Islamic-State-fighter-Turkey-paved-the-way-for-us-369443>

- “Prime Minister’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s “AKP government has helped us a lot” since the war in Syria began, an Islamic State fighter told a Turkish journalist.”... “Turkey paved the way for us. Had Turkey not shown such understanding for us, the Islamic State would not be in its current place. It [Turkey] showed us affection. Large number of our mujahedeen [jihadis] received medical treatment in Turkey,” he said.”...

The Guardian, August 6, 2014:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/07/40000-iraqis-stranded-mountain-isis-death-threat>

“Tens of thousands of members of one of Iraq’s oldest minorities have been stranded on a mountain in the country’s north-west, facing slaughter at the hands of jihadists surrounding them below if they flee, or death by dehydration if they stay. UN groups say at least 40,000 members of the Yazidi sect, many of them women and children, have taken refuge in nine locations on Mount Sinjar, a craggy, mile-high ridge identified in local legend as the final resting place of Noah’s ark. At least 130,000 more people, many from the Yazidi stronghold of Sinjar, have fled to Dohuk, in the Kurdish north, or to Irbil, where regional authorities have been struggling since June to deal with one of the biggest and most rapid refugee movements in decades.”

The Telegraph, August 7, 2014:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/11018298/Islamic-State-pulls-down-church-crosses-in-northern-Iraq-as-200000-flee.html>

- “Islamic State jihadists who took over large areas of northern Iraq overnight have forced thousands of Christians to flee and occupied churches, removing crosses and destroying manuscripts, Chaldean Patriarch Louis Sako has said.”

Reuters, August 7, 2014:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/07/iraq-security-pope-idINKBN0G718P20140807>

- “Pope Francis appealed to world leaders on Thursday to help end the crisis in northern Iraq after a sweeping advance by radical Islamic state militants forced thousands of residents of Iraq’s biggest Christian town to flee their homes.”

The Independent, August 7, 2014:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-takes-iraqs-largest-christian-town-of-qaraqosh-9653789.html> – “Christians from the town of Qaraqosh were fleeing today after it was taken by fighters from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Isis) on Wednesday night.”

The Independent, August 12, 2014:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraq-crisis-un-warns-yazidis-refugees-trapped-on-mount-sinjar-are-facing-imminent-genocide-from-is-militants-9665003.html>

“The United Nations has warned that a mass atrocity or genocide of refugees in the Mount Sinjar region of northern Iraq could still happen “within days or hours”. The UN’s special rapporteur who has been investigating the plight of 40,000 mainly Kurdish-speaking Yazidis who fled to the mountain fearing attacks from the extremist militants of the Islamic State (IS), said the world urgently needed to recognise the severity of the humanitarian crisis.”

The Times of Israel, August 13, 2014:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/syrian-rebel-commander-says-he-collaborated-with-israel/>

- “A Free Syrian Army commander, arrested last month by the Islamist militia Al-Nusra Front, told his captors he collaborated with Israel in return for medical and military support, in a video released this week.”

Jewish Telegraphic Agency, August 13, 2014:

<http://www.jta.org/2014/08/13/news-opinion/world/dutch-justice-ministry-employee-isis-a-zioist-conspiracy#ixzz3AOhp8bqh>

- “A senior employee of the Dutch Justice Ministry said the jihadist group ISIS was created by Zionists seeking to give Islam a bad reputation.”

The Atlantic, August 14, 2014:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/08/isis-a-short-history/376030/>

- “ISI’s ranks were swelled by former Sons of Iraq, many of whom had previously been commanders and soldiers in Saddam’s military. This gave Baghdadi’s fighters the air of an army, rather than a rag-tag militant outfit.”

Washington Post, August 18, 2014:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/08/18/the-terrorists-fighting-us-now-we-just-finished-training-them/>

- “In recent years, President Obama, his European friends, and even some Middle Eastern allies, have supported “rebel groups” in Libya and Syria. Some received training, financial and military support to overthrow Muammar Gadhafi and battle Bashar al Assad. It’s a strategy that follows the old saying, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend,” and it has been the American and allied approach for decades in deciding whether to support opposition groups and movements.”... “In the East of Syria, there is no Free Syrian Army any longer. All Free Syrian Army people [there] have joined the Islamic State,” says Abu Yusaf, a high-level security commander of the Islamic State, whom The Washington Post’s Anthony Faiola wrote about last week.”... “There had [also] been ... some British and Americans who had trained us during the Arab Spring times in Libya,” said a man who calls himself Abu Saleh and who only agreed to be interviewed if his real identity remained secret. Abu Saleh, who is originally from a town close to Benghazi, said he and a group of other Libyans received training and support in their country from French, British, and American military and intelligence personnel — before they joined the Al Nusra Front or the Islamic State. Western and Arab military sources interviewed for this article, confirmed Abu Saleh’s account that “training” and “equipment” were given to rebels in Libya during the fight against the Gadhafi regime. Abu Saleh left Libya in 2012 for Turkey and then crossed into Syria. “First I fought under what people call the ‘Free Syrian Army’ but then switched to Al Nusra. And I have already decided I will join the Islamic State when my wounds are healed,” the 28-year-old said from a hospital in Turkey, where he is receiving medical treatment.”

Raw Story, August 20, 2014:

<http://www.rawstory.com/2014/08/german-minister-accuses-qatar-of-funding-islamic-state-fighters/>

- “German Development Minister Gerd Mueller accused Qatar on Wednesday of financing Islamic State militants”... “In March, David Cohen, the U.S. Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, cited reports of Qatari backing for Islamist fighters in Syria and described this as a “permissive jurisdiction” for donors funding militants.”

New York Times, August 21, 2014:

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/22/world/middleeast/isis-believed-to-have-as-many-as-17000-fighters.html?_r=0

– “The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria cannot be defeated unless the United States or its partners take on the Sunni militants in Syria, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said Thursday.”... “In the current battle with ISIS inside Iraq, Mr. Obama’s military strategy has been aimed at containing the militant organization rather than defeating it, according to Defense Department officials and military experts.”

Interactive Investor, August 21, 2014:

<http://www.iii.co.uk/investment/detail?code=cotn%3AGKP.L&display=discussion&thread=0&action=detail&id=11338779>

– “The accusations of a Kurdish role in the export of oil lifted by ISIS comes amid a long-running dispute between Baghdad and the government of Iraq’s autonomous Kurdish region in Erbil.”... “Throughout the recent crisis, Iraqi Kurdistan has continued to export oil. A number of tankers loaded with Kurdish oil have been shipping to European countries in recent weeks, and Turkish officials told Reuters on Thursday the pipeline from Kurdistan to Turkey was up and running again after being upgraded. State of Law coalition MP Alia Nasseeif accused the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of being embroiled in trading oil with ISIS. “What is happening shows the extent of the massive conspiracy against Iraq by Kurdish politicians . . . The [illegal] sale of Iraqi oil to ISIS or anyone else is something that would not surprise us.” Nasseeif stressed the importance of “tracking down these unconstitutional activities and raising complaints about nations which participate with them, whether they are the Kurds or ISIS fighters, especially since the oil is being used for terrorist activities, as happened in Syria when they [ISIS] took over some oilfields there.”

Ashraq Al-Awsat, August 21, 2014:

<http://www.aawsat.net/2014/08/article55335732>

- “Iraq has warned buyers of crude oil that any unauthorized oil purchases made from its territory could be used to fund activities by the extremist militant group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).”... “Speaking on condition of anonymity, an informed source told Ashraq Al-Awsat that ISIS was indeed selling Iraqi crude from captured refineries and oilfields. He said the crude was being sold to Kurdish traders in the border regions straddling Iraq, Iran and Syria, and was being shipped to Pakistan where it was being sold “for less than half its original price.” He added that many oilfields and refineries in the country remained outside government control. The accusations of a Kurdish role in the export of oil lifted by ISIS comes amid a long-running dispute between Baghdad and the government of Iraq’s autonomous Kurdish region in Erbil.”... “Throughout the recent crisis, Iraqi Kurdistan has continued to export oil. A number of tankers loaded with Kurdish oil have been shipping to European countries in recent weeks, and Turkish

officials told Reuters on Thursday the pipeline from Kurdistan to Turkey was up and running again after being upgraded.”

CNN, August 22, 2014:

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/18/business/al-khatteeb-isis-oil-iraq/>

- “A month ago, the ISIS-controlled oil market in Iraq was reported to be worth \$1 million a day. Now, with expansion, further control of oil fields and smuggling routes, the market is believed to be raising at least \$2 million a day. This could fetch them more than \$730 million a year, enough to sustain the operation beyond Iraq.”

The Telegraph, August 25, 2014:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/bill-gardner/11054488/Foley-murder-video-may-have-been-staged.html>

- “The video of James Foley’s execution may have been staged, with the actual murder taking place off-camera, it has emerged. Forensic analysis of the footage of the journalist’s death has suggested that the British jihadist in the film may have been the frontman rather than the killer.”

The Times (UK News), August 25, 2014:

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article4186089.ece>

- “The video of a British jihadist beheading an American hostage was probably staged, with the actual murder taking place off-camera, according to forensic analysis.”

USA Today, August 27, 2014:

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/08/26/american-surveillance-flights-syria/14607355/>

- “U.S. surveillance flights over Syria have started with President Obama’s go-ahead, a step that will provide potential targets if airstrikes against Islamic State militants are approved.”

Yahoo, August 29, 2014:

<http://news.yahoo.com/u-says-no-specific-threat-u-homeland-islamic-165127981.html#>

- “The United States is not aware of any specific threat to the U.S. homeland from Islamic State militants, the Department of Homeland Security said on Friday after Britain raised its international terrorism threat level.”

CBC News, August 29, 2014: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/syrian-refugees-top-3-million-un-says-1.2750154>

- “Three million Syrian refugees will have registered in neighbouring countries as of Friday, an exodus that began in March 2011 and shows no sign of abating, the United Nations said. The record figure is one million refugees more than a year ago, while a further 6.5 million are displaced within Syria, meaning that “almost half of all Syrians have now been forced to abandon their homes and flee for their lives,” it said.”

Brookings Institute, September/October 2014

Issue: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/09/02-army-defeat-assad-syria-pollack>

- “The cons begin with the simple fact that the United States has no interests in Syria itself. Syria is not an oil producer, a major U.S. trade partner, or even a democracy.”... “But there is, in fact, a way that the United States could get what it wants in Syria — and, ultimately, in Iraq as well — without sending in U.S. forces: by building a new Syrian opposition army capable of defeating both President Bashar al-Assad and the

more militant Islamists. The United States has pulled off similar operations before and could probably do so again, and at far lower cost than what it has spent in Afghanistan and Iraq.”... “Second, any proposal must provide for the defeat of both the Assad regime and the most radical Islamist militants, since both threaten U.S. interests.”... “Recruiting Syrian army personnel would be the first task.

These men and women could come from any part of the country or its diaspora, as long as they were Syrian and willing to fight in the new army. They would need to integrate themselves into a conventional military structure and adopt its doctrine and rules of conduct. They would also have to be willing to leave their existing militias and become reassigned to new units without regard for religion, ethnicity, or geographic origin. Loyalty to the new army and to the vision of a democratic postwar Syria for which it would stand must supersede all other competing identities. The strategy’s most critical aspect would be its emphasis on long-term conventional training. The program would represent a major departure from the assistance Washington is currently providing the opposition, which involves a few weeks of coaching in weapons handling and small-unit tactics.

The new regimen, by contrast, should last at least a year, beginning with such basic training and then progressing to logistics, medical support, and specialized military skills.”... “Because the existing Syrian opposition is hobbled by extremism and a lack of professionalism, vetting all new personnel would be crucial. History shows that the only effective way to do this is for the U.S. advisers to work with the recruits on a daily basis. That would allow the advisers to gradually weed out the inevitable bad seeds — radicals, regime agents, thugs, and felons — and promote the good ones. Since training the first cadre of fighters (a task that the CIA would likely handle) would require security and freedom from distraction, it would be best to start it outside Syria. Possible training sites could include Jordan, where the United States is already providing some aid to the rebels, and Turkey. Both countries have strongly lobbied Washington to widen its support for the Syrian opposition.

Yet both would probably demand compensation for hosting big new base camps. Jordan already receives about \$660 million in U.S. aid per year, and in February 2014, the White House pledged an additional \$1 billion in loan guarantees to help the country with its refugee burden. Washington could offer to continue such aid in return for cooperation with its new strategy.”...

“This new Syrian army would eventually move into Syria, but only once it was strong enough to conquer and hold territory. For that, it would need to reach a critical threshold of both quantity and quality.”... “Adding these sums together yields a total operating budget of \$3 billion annually for two or three years at the lower end of the price scale. If an air campaign on the scale of that in Bosnia, Afghanistan, or Libya were required, the annual price would rise to roughly \$9–\$10 billion for as long as the fighting continued. And if the United States were forced to provide twice as much air power as it did in those earlier wars, the cost could reach \$18–\$22 billion per year. Following a political settlement, Washington’s continued support for the new government would probably require \$1–\$5 billion in civilian and security assistance annually for up to a decade. By comparison, Afghanistan cost the United States roughly \$45 billion a year from 2001 to 2013, and Iraq, about \$100 billion a year from 2003 to 2011.”

Morocco World News, September 5, 2014:

<http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2014/09/138139/saudi-scholar-claims-that-isis-is-backed-by-western-intelligence/>

- “In an interview with Television channel Rotana Khalijia, Al-Ghaith who is a member of the consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia, an advisory body whose 150 members are appointed by the Saudi Monarch, accused the intelligence agencies of key regional players, including Iran and Iraq in addition to the American intelligence of funding and arming ISIS.”

Arutz Sheva, September 7, 2014:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/184823#.VdyAwJfnhqx>

– “The Ambassador for the European Union (EU) in Iraq, Jana Hybaskova, admitted last week that several EU member states have bought oil from the Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS) terrorist organization that has been brutally conquering large portions of Iraq and Syria.”... “In addition to its implementation of brutal Islamic law, including numerous public executions, IS in late June captured Iraq’s largest oil refinery factory, days later in early July capturing the largest oil field in Syria, and another Syrian oil field a few days after that.”

New York Times, September 7, 2014:

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/08/world/middleeast/destroying-isis-may-take-3-years-white-house-says.html?_r=0&assetType=nyt_now

– “The Obama administration is preparing to carry out a campaign against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria that may take three years to complete, requiring a sustained effort that could last until after President Obama has left office, according to senior administration officials.”

The Daily Star, September 8, 2014:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Sep-08/269883-frustration-drives-arsals-fsa-into-isis-ranks.ashx#axzz3J0w651YT> – “Frustration drives Arsal’s FSA into ISIS ranks”

CNN, September 10, 2014:

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/10/politics/isis-obama-speech/>

- “It’s time to go after ISIS in Iraq and Syria, President Barack Obama said Wednesday night in a nationally televised address intended to sell stepped-up military efforts to a war-weary public. Announcing a broad campaign against the Sunni jihadists who have rampaged from Syria across northern Iraq, Obama announced an escalated U.S. military role as part of a strategy that includes building an international coalition to support Iraqi ground forces and perhaps troops from other allies.”... “The Saudis made very clear that they support this mission, they will join us in this mission,” a senior administration official said. “We are joined by very important Arab partners as well.”

The Guardian, September 10, 2014:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/11/obama-isis-syria-air-strikes-legal-argument>

- “Obama’s legal arguments for unilaterally expanding a war expected to last years have shocked even his supporters. Ahead of Wednesday’s speech the White House signaled that Obama already “has the authority he needs to take action” against Isis without congressional approval. Obama said he would welcome congressional support but framed it as optional, save for the authorisations and the \$500m he wants to use the US military to train Syrian rebels. Bipartisan congressional leaders who met with Obama at

the White House on Tuesday expressed no outrage.”... “Some of Obama’s legislative brushoffs are straightforward. The administration did not seek legislative authority for its 2011 Libya air war, something Congress was unlikely to grant. Scepticism also mounted in Congress last year when Obama proposed attacking Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. Secretary of state John Kerry told the Huffington Post that Obama could bomb Assad even if Congress voted against it.”

The Times of Israel, September 11, 2014:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/pm-were-playing-our-part-in-fighting-global-terrorism/>

- “Israel is doing its part in confronting worldwide jihadist terrorism, though not all of its efforts are known to the public, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday, expressing Jerusalem’s full support for the American-led offensive against the Islamic State organization unveiled Wednesday.”... “The greatest threat to world peace, Netanyahu said, would be a nuclear-equipped Iran. “You would see things you never imagined could be possible,” he said, describing a scenario in which the regime succeeded in obtaining nuclear weapons. “Horrors you couldn’t even contemplate come to fruition. The ultimate terror. A terrorist regime with the weapons of the greatest terror of them all. We must not let that happen.”

International Business Times, September 14, 2014:

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/us-senator-us-turned-blind-eye-saudi-role-9-11-fuelling-rise-isis-1465392>

- “The rise of Isis has been aided by the failure of the US government to investigate the connection between the Saudi Arabian government and jihadist networks, said former senator Bob Graham, co-chairman of the official inquiry into 9/11.”... “The 9/11 inquiry found that al-Qaida relied heavily on Saudi charities and private donors.”

The Nation, September 16, 2014:

<http://www.thenation.com/article/whos-paying-pro-war-pundits/>

- “If you read enough news and watch enough cable television about the threat of the Islamic State, the radical Sunni Muslim militia group better known simply as IS, you will inevitably encounter a parade of retired generals demanding an increased US military presence in the region. They will say that our government should deploy, as retired General Anthony Zinni demanded, up to 10,000 American boots on the ground to battle IS. Or as in retired General Jack Keane’s case, they will make more vague demands, such as for “offensive” air strikes and the deployment of more military advisers to the region. But what you won’t learn from media coverage of IS is that many of these former Pentagon officials have skin in the game as paid directors and advisers to some of the largest military contractors in the world.”... “Keane is a great example of this phenomenon.

His think tank, the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), which he oversees along with neoconservative partisans Liz Cheney and William Kristol”... “Left unsaid during his media appearances (and left unmentioned on his congressional witness disclosure form) are Keane’s other gigs: as special adviser to Academi, the contractor formerly known as Blackwater; as a board member to tank and aircraft manufacturer General Dynamics; a “venture partner” to SCP Partners, an investment firm that partners with defense contractors, including XVionics, an “operations management decision support system” company used in Air Force drone training; and as president of his own consulting firm, GSI LLC.”... “In a Washington Post story about Obama’s decision not to deploy troops

to combat IS, retired Marine General James Mattis was quoted as a skeptic. “The American people will once again see us in a war that doesn’t seem to be making progress,” Mattis told the paper. Left unmentioned was Mattis’s new role as Keane’s colleague on the General Dynamics corporate board, a role that afforded Mattis \$88,479 in cash and stock options in 2013. Retired General Anthony Zinni, perhaps the loudest advocate of a large deployment of American soldiers into the region to fight IS, is a board member to BAE Systems’ US subsidiary, and also works for several military-focused private equity firms.”... “CNN pundit Frances Townsend, a former Bush administration official, has recently appeared on television calling for more military engagement against IS. As the Public Accountability Initiative, a nonprofit that studies elite power structures, reported, Townsend “holds positions in two investment firms with defense company holdings, MacAndrews & Forbes and Monument Capital Group, and serves as an advisor to defense contractor Decision Sciences.”...

”When the Pentagon sent a recent \$2 billion request for ramped-up operations in the Middle East, supposedly to confront the IS issue, budget details obtained by Bloomberg News revealed that officials asked for money for additional F-35 planes. The F-35 is not in operation and would not be used against IS. The plane is notoriously over budget and perpetually delayed—some experts call it the most expensive weapon system in human history—with a price tag now projected to be over \$1 trillion.”

Today's Zaman, September 17, 2014:

http://www.todayszaman.com/national_nurse-says-shes-tired-of-treating-isil-terrorists_358992.html

- “A nurse who works at a private hospital in Mersin, a city and province on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey, has told Turkish authorities and Parliament that she is sick and tired of treating members of the terrorist organization the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which now calls itself the “Islamic State.”

The Hill, September 23, 2014:

<http://thehill.com/policy/defense/218656-pentagon-isis-campaign-could-last-years>

- “Pentagon officials on Tuesday described airstrikes in Syria against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as successful, but cautioned that they were just the beginning phase of a campaign that could last years.”... “There were three waves of attacks in Syria, carried out by the U.S. and Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, with Qatar in a supporting role.”

The Intercept, September 23, 2014:

<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2014/09/23/nobel-peace-prize-fact-day-syria-7th-country-bombed-obama/>

- “The U.S. today began bombing targets inside Syria, in concert with its lovely and inspiring group of five allied regimes: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Jordan. That means that Syria becomes the 7th predominantly Muslim country bombed by 2009 Nobel Peace Laureate Barack Obama—after Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Libya and Iraq.”

Salon, September 24, 2014:

http://www.salon.com/2014/09/24/heres_who_profits_from_our_new_war_inside_nsa_and_an_army_of_private_contractors_plans/

- “A massive, \$7.2 billion Army intelligence contract signed just 10 days ago underscores the central role to be played by the National Security Agency and its army of private

contractors in the unfolding air war being carried out by the United States and its Gulf States allies against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. That war was greatly expanded Monday night when U.S. forces launched a “mix of fighter, bomber, remotely-piloted aircraft and Tomahawk” cruise missiles against ISIS targets in Syria. The Central Command said the strikes were led by the United States with support from Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.”... “Under its terms, 21 companies, led by Booz Allen Hamilton, BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, will compete over the next five years to provide “fully integrated intelligence, security and information operations” in Afghanistan and “future contingency operations” around the world.”

Wall Street Journal, September 24, 2014:

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/deal-with-saudis-paved-way-for-syrian-airstrikes-1411605329>

- “The Americans knew a lot was riding on a Sept. 11 meeting with the king of Saudi Arabia at his summer palace on the Red Sea. A year earlier, King Abdullah had fumed when President Barack Obama called off strikes against the regime of Syria’s Bashar al-Assad. This time, the U.S. needed the king’s commitment to support a different Syrian mission—against the extremist group Islamic State—knowing there was little hope of assembling an Arab front without it. At the palace, Secretary of State John Kerry requested assistance up to and including air strikes, according to U.S. and Gulf officials.

“We will provide any support you need,” the king said.”... “After Islamic State made startling gains in Iraq, Saudi officials told Mr. Kerry in June that Iraqi leader Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite with close ties to Iran, needed to go, according to U.S officials. Once that happened, Riyadh would step up its role against Islamic State and work to bring other Gulf states onboard. The Obama administration had come to a similar conclusion and started to maneuver Mr. al-Maliki out of office.”... “In the last week of August, a U.S. military and State Department delegation flew to Riyadh to lay the ground for a military program to train the moderate Syrian opposition to fight both the Assad regime and Islamic State—something the Saudis have long requested. The U.S. team wanted permission to use Saudi facilities for the training. Top Saudi ministers, after consulting overnight with the king, agreed and offered to foot much of the bill. Mr. Jubeir went to Capitol Hill to pressed key lawmakers to approve legislation authorizing the training.”

Bloomberg, September 25, 2014:

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-09-25/syria-to-ukraine-wars-send-u-s-defense-stocks-to-records>

- “Led by Lockheed Martin Corp., the biggest U.S. defense companies are trading at record prices as shareholders reap rewards from escalating military conflicts around the world. Investors see rising sales for makers of missiles, drones and other weapons as the U.S. hits Islamic State fighters in Syria and Iraq, said Jack Ablin, chief investment officer at Chicago-based BMO Private Bank. President Barack Obama approved open-ended airstrikes this month while ruling out ground combat.”... “Lockheed, the world’s biggest defense company, reached an all-time high of \$180.74 on Sept. 19, when Northrop, Raytheon Co. and General Dynamics Corp. also set records. That quartet and Chicago-based Boeing accounted for about \$105 billion in federal contract orders last year, according to data compiled by Bloomberg Government.”

The Hill, September 26, 2014:

<http://thehill.com/policy/international/219017-state-department-assad-must-go-for-isis-to-be-defeated>

- “State Department deputy spokeswoman Marie Harf said on Friday that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) cannot be defeated as long as Syrian President Bashar Assad remains in power.”

The Daily Mail, September 26, 2014:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2770833/Alliance-hell-Al-Nusra-fighters-Syria-want-merge-ISIS-creating-united-army-fanatics.html>

- “Al Qaeda’s affiliate in Syria is facing mounting pressure from its members to form an ultra-alliance with the rival Islamic State to confront a common enemy after U.S.-led air strikes hit both groups this week.”... “The two share the same ideology and rigid Islamic beliefs, but fell out during a power struggle that pitted Islamic State head Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi against Al Qaeda chief Ayman Zawahri and Al Nusra Front leader Abu Mohammad al-Golani. But merging would require pledging loyalty to Islamic State, which has declared a caliphate in territory it controls in Iraq and Syria, which would effectively put an end to the Al Nusra Front, fighters in the group say.”

ABC News (Australian), September 28, 2014:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-29/us-led-air-strikes-on-is-oil-refineries-not-a-real-target/5774992>

“Air strikes believed to have been carried out by US-led forces have hit three makeshift oil refineries in Syria’s Raqqa province as part of an assault to weaken Islamic State (IS) militants, a monitoring group said.”... “These so-called refineries are not a real target and they do not weaken the Islamic State as they do not have any financial value for them,” Rami Abdelrahman of the Observatory told Reuters. “They are composed of trucks with equipment to separate diesel and petrol used by civilians.”

NBC News, October 1, 2014: <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/cost-u-s-campaign-against-isis-roughly-1-billion-n215126>

- “The cost of the American military campaign against ISIS likely has passed \$1 billion. The Pentagon estimated that the U.S. air operation cost \$7.5 million per day when surveillance flights began over Iraq on June 16. That estimate increased to \$10 million when bombing began Aug. 8. That alone would put the estimated cost at \$937 million. On the first night of the strikes in Syria, the United States also fired 47 Tomahawk missiles, which cost more than \$1 million each, higher for more advanced models.

Dallas Morning News, October 5, 2014:

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/local-news/20141005-u.s.-helicopters-join-fight-against-islamic-state-in-iraq.ece>

- “The United States sent helicopters into combat against Islamic State targets west of Baghdad”

New York Times, October 5, 2014:

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/06/world/isis-ammunition-is-shown-to-have-origins-in-us-and-china.html?_r=0

- “In its campaign across northern Syria and Iraq, the jihadist group Islamic State has been using ammunition from the United States and other countries that have been supporting the regional security forces fighting the group”...

Washington Post, October 21, 2014:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2014/10/21/u-s-accidentally-delivered-weapons-to-the-islamic-state-by-airdrop-militants-allege/>

- “The Islamic State has released a new video in which it brags that it recovered weapons and supplies that the U.S. military intended to deliver to Kurdish fighters, who are locked in a fight with the militants over control of the Syrian border town of Kobane.”

BBC News, October 22, 2014:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29715044>

- “But a video uploaded to the internet by a media group loyal to IS showed a cache of weapons, apparently dropped by the US, in militant hands. Activists from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also said militants had seized one cache.”

NBC News, October 22, 2014:

<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/u-s-weapons-airdropped-kurds-ended-isiss-hands-pentagon-n231671>

- “A pallet of weapons meant for Kurdish fighters, airdropped by the U.S. over Syria this week, landed instead in the hands of ISIS militants, Pentagon officials said Wednesday. And a second delivery that went astray was purposely destroyed by U.S. combat aircraft as a precautionary measure, the officials said.”

The Independent, October 23, 2014:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/war-on-isis-us-planning-to-bomb-oil-pipelines-to-halt-jihadists-funding-9813980.html>

- “The US is considering bombing pipelines in Syria in an attempt to cut off the huge profits being made by Isis from captured oilfields, a senior Obama administration official disclosed today.”

The Telegraph, October 23, 2014:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11182490/US-considers-air-strikes-against-Isil-oil-pipelines.html>

- “America is considering whether to bomb Isil’s oil pipelines in Syria and choke one of the movement’s biggest sources of revenue, a senior US official said on Thursday. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isil) is believed to raise about \$1m (£600,000) a day from oilfields under its control in the deserts of eastern Syria. Oil wells in the Jafra field have already been destroyed by air strikes, but the US is now weighing whether to expand its target list to include pipelines.”

The Telegraph, November 2, 2014:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11203825/Syrian-rebels-armed-and-trained-by-US-surrender-to-al-Qaeda.html>

- “Two of the main rebel groups receiving weapons from the United States to fight both the regime and jihadist groups in Syria have surrendered to al-Qaeda.”

Washington Post, November 2, 2014: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-backed-syria-rebels-routed-by-fighters-linked-to-al-qaeda/2014/11/02/7a8b1351-8fb7-4f7e-a477-66ec0a0aaef34_story.html

- “The Obama administration’s Syria strategy suffered a major setback Sunday after fighters linked to al-Qaeda routed U.S.-backed rebels from their main northern strongholds, capturing significant quantities of weaponry, triggering widespread defections and ending hopes that Washington will readily find Syrian partners in its war against the Islamic State.”...” Moderate rebels who had been armed and trained by the

United States either surrendered or defected to the extremists as the Jabhat al-Nusra group, affiliated with al-Qaeda, swept through the towns and villages the moderates controlled in the northern province of Idlib, in what appeared to be a concerted push to vanquish the moderate Free Syrian Army, according to rebel commanders, activists and analysts.”

Brookings Institute, November 7, 2014:

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/11/07-big-questions-islamic-state-threat-hein>

- “Rather than defeat, containing their activities within failed or near-failing states is the best option for the foreseeable future.”... “There is a parallel here between the war on Islamic extremists and the war on drugs: the absolute end-states for both may be unachievable, but that in no way diminishes the need to execute counter operations. Some wars cannot be won but still must be fought. There are other hard questions for even bigger threats in the Middle East, such as how to ensure a nuclear free Iran and how to deal with the Assad regime in Syria. For ISIS, though, we may have it right.”

The Washington Post, November 7, 2014:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/obama-more-than-doubles-number-of-troops-authorized-for-iraq/2014/11/07/846e0442-66bb-11e4-9fdc-d43b053ecb4d_story.html

- “President Obama authorized Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel on Friday to send up to 1,500 additional U.S. troops to Iraq, roughly doubling the force the United States has built up since June to fight the Islamic State militants who control much of Iraq and Syria.”

The Guardian, November 9, 2014:

<http://www.theguardian.com/business/economics-blog/2014/nov/09/us-iran-russia-oil-prices-shale>

- “That, though, is not the whole story. The fourfold increase in oil prices triggered by the embargo on exports organised by Saudi Arabia in response to the Yom Kippur war in 1973 showed how crude could be used as a diplomatic and economic weapon. History is repeating itself.”... “Instead, with the help of its Saudi ally, Washington is trying to drive down the oil price by flooding an already weak market with crude. As the Russians and the Iranians are heavily dependent on oil exports, the assumption is that they will become easier to deal with. John Kerry, the US secretary of state, allegedly struck a deal with King Abdullah in September under which the Saudis would sell crude at below the prevailing market price. That would help explain why the price has been falling at a time when, given the turmoil in Iraq and Syria caused by Islamic State, it would normally have been rising.”

The Telegraph, November 11, 2014:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11224488/Fears-that-US-weapons-will-fall-into-al-Qaeda-s-hands-as-Syrian-rebels-defect.html>

- “Western-backed “moderate” rebels fighting jihadists in Syria are refusing to do battle, giving up and even defecting for lack of weapons and other promised support, leaders have told The Telegraph.”... “What support there is, is kept on a short leash from two operations rooms, one in Turkey, and one in Jordan. The operations rooms include representatives from the US, Britain, France, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Turkey.”

DW News, November 11, 2014:

<http://www.dw.com/en/is-supply-channels-through-turkey/av-18091048>

- “Every day, trucks laden with food, clothing, and other supplies cross the border from Turkey to Syria. It is unclear who is picking up the goods. The haulers believe most of the cargo is going to the “Islamic State” militia.”

Washington Post, December 1, 2014:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/lack-of-funds-at-world-food-program-leaves-17-million-syrians-without-critical-aid/2014/12/01/1ebb8b1a-834e-4e5a-840a-329ccbf282f_story.html

- “A funding crisis has forced the World Food Program to suspend assistance to 1.7 million Syrian refugees, the U.N. agency announced Monday, warning that “many families will go hungry” without the aid.”... “The flow of an estimated 3.3 million Syrians from the conflict in their country has badly strained neighboring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan.”

Haaretz, December 7, 2014:

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.630359>

- “Reports by UN observers in the Golan Heights over the past 18 months reveal the type and extent of cooperation between Israel and Syrian opposition figures. The reports, submitted to the 15 members of the UN Security Council and available on the UN’s website, detail regular contacts held on the border between IDF officers and soldiers and Syrian rebels.”

The Guardian, December 7, 2014:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/07/israeli-jets-bomb-syria-says-damascus> -

“Syria accused Israeli jets of bombing two installations inside the country on Sunday, one near the capital, Damascus, and the second in a town near the Lebanese border.”... “Israel has carried out several air strikes in Syria since the revolt against Bashar al-Assad began in March 2011. Binyamin Netanyahu has repeatedly threatened to take military action to prevent Syria from transferring sophisticated weapons to its ally Hezbollah. In June, Israel struck targets inside Syria, including a military installation, following a cross-border attack that killed an Israeli teenager. Israel said at the time that it had struck nine military targets inside its northern neighbour and had confirmed “direct hits”.”

International Business Times, December 7, 2014:

<http://www.ibtimes.co.in/un-report-israel-regular-contact-syrian-rebels-including-isis-616404>

- “A report submitted to the United Nations Security Council by UN observers in the Golan Heights over the past 18 months shows that Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) have been in regular contact with Syrian rebels, including Islamic State (ISIS) militants. Citing the UN report, Haaretz noted that there have been several instances detailed in the report that shows close ties between Syrian armed rebels and Israeli army.”... As per the details released by the Israel’s health ministry, so far some 1,000 Syrians have been treated in four Israeli hospitals. Besides the civilians, some are members of the secular Free Syrian Army rebel group. Israel initially had maintained that it was treating only civilians. However, reports claimed that earlier last month members of Israel’s Druze minority protested the hospitalisation of wounded Syrian fighters from the al-Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front in Israel.”... “Replying to a question by i24News on whether Israel has given medical assistance to members of al-Nusra and Daesh (the Arabic acronym for the

Islamic State (ISIS), a Israeli military spokesman's office said: "In the past two years the Israel Defence Forces have been engaged in humanitarian, life-saving aid to wounded Syrians, irrespective of their identity."

Oilprice, December 23, 2014:

<http://oilprice.com/Energy/Oil-Prices/Did-The-Saudis-And-The-US-Collude-In-Dropping-Oil-Prices.html>

- "The oil price drop that has dominated the headlines in recent weeks has been framed almost exclusively in terms of oil market economics, with most media outlets blaming Saudi Arabia, through its OPEC Trojan horse, for driving down the price, thus causing serious damage to the world's major oil exporters – most notably Russia. While the market explanation is partially true, it is simplistic, and fails to address key geopolitical pressure points in the Middle East."... "What is the reason for the United States and some U.S. allies wanting to drive down the price of oil?" Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro asked rhetorically in October. "To harm Russia."... "Proponents of this theory point to a Sept. 11 meeting between US Secretary of State John Kerry and Saudi King Abdullah at his palace on the Red Sea. According to an article in the Wall Street Journal, it was during that meeting that a deal was hammered out between Kerry and Abdullah. In it, the Saudis would support Syrian airstrikes against Islamic State (ISIS), in exchange for Washington backing the Saudis in toppling Assad."...

"Some commentators have offered a more conspiratorial theory for the Saudis wanting to get rid of Assad. They point to a 2011 agreement between Syria, Iran and Iraq that would see a pipeline running from the Iranian Port Assalouyeh to Damascus via Iraq. The \$10-billion project would take three years to complete and would be fed gas from the South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar. Iranian officials have said they plan to extend the pipeline to the Mediterranean to supply gas to Europe – in competition with Qatar, the world's largest LNG exporter. "The Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline – if it's ever built – would solidify a predominantly Shi'ite axis through an economic, steel umbilical cord," wrote Asia Times correspondent Pepe Escobar."... "How does Russia play into the oil price drop? As a key ally of Syria, supplying Assad with billions in weaponry, President Vladimir Putin has, along with Iran, found himself targeted by the House of Saud."

Middle East Eye, January 1, 2015:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/us-army-report-calls-military-support-israeli-energy-grab-57185571>

- "A new report by the US Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute emphasises the need for "US security and military support" to its key allies in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly Israel, over access to recent vast discoveries of regional oil and gas. The Army study, released earlier in December 2014, concludes that extensive US military involvement "may prove essential in managing possible future conflict" in case of "an eruption of natural resource conflict in the East Mediterranean," due to huge gas discoveries in recent years."...

Al-Jazeera, January 8, 2015:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2015/01/us-coalition-drops-nearly-5000-bombs-isil-20151894916660171.html>

- “US-led aircraft have dropped nearly 5,000 bombs against Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) targets in Iraq and Syria, as Washington said it was reviewing several incidents in which civilians may have been killed.”

The Daily Beast, January 15, 2015:

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/01/14/exclusive-isis-gaining-ground-in-syria-despite-u-s-strikes.html>

- “ISIS continues to gain substantial ground in Syria, despite nearly 800 airstrikes in the American-led campaign to break its grip there. At least one-third of the country’s territory is now under ISIS influence, with recent gains in rural areas that can serve as a conduit to major cities that the so-called Islamic State hopes to eventually claim as part of its caliphate.”

CBS News, January 16, 2015:

http://www.cbsnews.com/news/u-s-to-send-400-troops-to-train-syrian-rebels/?google_editors_picks=true

– “The United States will send more than 400 troops to train moderate Syrian rebels this spring along with hundreds of support personnel.” ...”The law authorized the training and equipping of moderate Syrian rebels battling the extremists for two years, and provided \$5 billion to train Iraqis battling the militants who brutally rule large sections of the two countries.”...” Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have offered to host the training, Reuters points out.”

RT, January 17, 2015:

<http://www.rt.com/usa/223559-us-troops-syria-training/>

- “The Pentagon announced that a mission to train the “moderate” Syrian opposition may involve over 1,000 US troops. The first soldiers may flow into the region in a month, while the trained fighters may return to Syria to “fight ISIS” by the end of 2015. The earlier announced number suggested 400 pairs of US boots on the ground in countries neighboring Syria, where the training will take place. However, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters in a press briefing on Friday that the total number “could approach 1,000.”... “The troops, ranging from special operations to conventional forces, will be based in at least three different training sites – in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey”.... “The \$500 million training plan for Syrian insurgents was first proposed by the Pentagon in June last year. Congress first approved the measure in September for three months, and last month has extended the program through 2016.”

The Express Tribune, January 28, 2015:

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/828761/startling-revelations-is-operative-confesses-to-getting-funds-via-us/>

- “Yousaf al Salafi – allegedly the Pakistan commander of Islamic State (IS) or Daish – has confessed during investigations that he has been receiving funds through the United States.”... “Sources said al Salafi’s revelations were shared with the US Secretary of State John Kerry during his recent visit to Islamabad. “The matter was also taken up with CENTCOM chief General Lloyd Austin during his visit to Islamabad earlier this month,” a source said.” Al Salafi also confessed that he – along with a Pakistani accomplice, reportedly imam of a mosque – was recruiting people to send them to Syria and was getting around \$600 per person from Syria.”

The Independent, January 28, 2015:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/intervention-in-civil-wars-far-more-likely-in-oilrich-nations-10006648.html>

- “According to academics from the Universities of Portsmouth, Warwick and Essex, foreign intervention in a civil war is 100 times more likely when the afflicted country has high oil reserves than if it has none. The research is the first to confirm the role of oil as a dominant motivating factor in conflict, suggesting hydrocarbons were a major reason for the military intervention in Libya, by a coalition which included the UK, and the current US campaign against Isis in northern Iraq.”

Middle East Eye, January 28, 2015:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/how-islamist-rebels-engineered-israel-s-oil-grab-syria-740568063>

- “A US oil company is preparing to drill for oil in the Golan Heights. Granted the license in February 2013 by Israel, Afek Oil and Gas is a subsidiary of Genie Energy Ltd, whose equity-holding board members include former US Vice President Dick Cheney, controversial media mogul Rupert Murdoch and financier Lord Jacob Rothschild. Also on the board is Brigadier General Effie Eitam, a former Israeli minister for infrastructure who currently resides in the Golan Heights himself.”... The role of a prominent US energy company in the Golan Heights demonstrates that the Netanyahu administration has Obama’s unwavering backing in its effort to expand Israel’s energy footprint into Syria. Yet there is considerable evidence that the burgeoning threat from Islamist militants in the Golan Heights is a direct consequence of Israel’s covert sponsorship of anti-Assad rebels in the region.

Last year, reports submitted by UN observers in the Golan Heights to the UN Security Council revealed a disturbing pattern of “cooperation between Israel and Syrian opposition figures” over a period of 18 months. The extensive reports confirmed that the Israeli army was assisting wounded Syrian rebels, and providing military assistance, from around March 2013 to summer 2014.”... “The UN observer reports also revealed that the Israeli army was allowing Syrian rebels inside Israel. Last December, on his widely-read blog Tikun Olam, Israeli national security journalist Richard Silverstein cited Hebrew news reports showing that the Israeli army had established “a Camp Ashraf-style Syrian rebel encampment just inside Israeli territory on the border.”

New York Times, February 3, 2015:

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/04/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-is-said-to-use-oil-to-lure-russia-away-from-syrias-assad.html?_r=0

- “Saudi Arabia has been trying to pressure President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to abandon his support for President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, using its dominance of the global oil markets at a time when the Russian government is reeling from the effects of plummeting oil prices.”

CNN Money, February 11, 2015:

<http://money.cnn.com/2015/02/11/news/economy/oil-price-fall-saudi-arabia/>

- “Richard Fisher, the head of the Dallas Federal Reserve, said “the Saudis have engineered” the oil crisis. He was speaking Wednesday at the Economic Club of New York.”... “Fisher also noted that the Saudis benefit not just economically, but politically from the oil price decline. Low oil prices especially hurt their biggest regional rival: Iran. “I’m sure King Abdullah thought to himself, ‘I’ve also done a favor vis-a-vis Iran,’”

Fisher told reporters. Iran's economy needs oil to trade around \$135. Saudi has far larger cash reserves and is thus able to withstand a downturn in prices for much longer."

Foreign Policy, February 14, 2015:

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/24/syrias-christians-fight-back-assyrian-militias/>

- "In northern Syria, a small band of Assyrian Christians are defending their people — and their religious identity — from the Islamic State and Assad alike."

The Telegraph, February 17, 2015:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11419243/Moderate-Syrian-rebels-to-be-given-power-to-call-in-US-air-strikes.html>

- "The US and Turkey have reached a tentative deal to train and equip moderate Syrian rebels, according to officials from both countries, amid reports that commanders will be given authority to call in air strikes."... "At the same time The Wall Street Journal reported that some rebels will be equipped with pick-up trucks modified with mounted machine guns as well as radios for calling in US airstrikes – an approach modelled on that used to successful effect by Kurdish forces in Kobane last month."

The Independent, February 17, 2015:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/sudans-president-claims-cia-and-mossad-stand-behind-isis-and-boko-haram-10051024.html>

- "Sudan's President has claimed the CIA, America's intelligence agency, and Israel's Mossad are behind the Islamist militant groups Boko Haram and Isis."

International Business Times, February 22, 2015: <http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-beheading-video-21-egyptian-christians-fake-film-experts-argue-yes-1824034> -

"The Islamic State group video of the beheading of 21 Coptic Christians by a Libyan beach that was released Feb. 15 sickened and outraged the world. It even prompted Egyptian airstrikes in retaliation near the eastern port city of Tripoli, where it looked like the video had been shot. But some experts — including Veryan Khan, executive director of the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium in Florida, and Mary Lambert, a horror filmmaker who directed "Pet Sematary" — told FoxNews.com that much of the video appears to have been manipulated."

The Times of Israel, February 25, 2015:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/saudis-said-to-mull-air-passage-for-israeli-jets-to-attack-iran/>

- "Saudi Arabia is prepared to let Israeli fighter jets use its airspace if it proves necessary to attack Iran's nuclear program, an Israeli TV station reported Tuesday, highlighting growing ties in the shadow of Tehran's nuclear drive."... "The Saudi authorities are completely coordinated with Israel on all matters related to Iran," the European official in Brussels said."

The Telegraph, February 28, 2015:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11442355/How-Syrias-Christians-stopped-turning-the-other-cheek.html>

- "For the last week, they have been fighting the jihadists of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant across a major front in north-west Syria, in alliance with the YPG, the Kurdish defence forces. They have had mixed fortunes, but the battle has energised Middle East Christians worldwide – many of them exiles who fled the chaos of post-Saddam Iraq."... "In 2003, the Christian population of Iraq was well over one million. Now it is less than

half that. In June last year, more than 600,000 were driven out of their homes when Isil swept across the Nineveh plain, traditional homeland of Assyrian Christians, in northern Iraq last summer.”

Reuters, March 4, 2015:

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/03/04/uk-mideast-crisis-nusra-insight-idUKKBN0M00G620150304>

- “Leaders of Syria’s Nusra Front are considering cutting their links with al Qaeda to form a new entity backed by some Gulf states trying to topple President Bashar al-Assad, sources said. Sources within and close to Nusra said that Qatar, which enjoys good relations with the group, is encouraging the group to go ahead with the move, which would give Nusra a boost in funding.”... “The Nusra Front is listed as a terrorist group by the United States and has been sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council. But for Qatar at least, rebranding Nusra would remove legal obstacles to supporting it.”... “But if Nusra is dissolved and it abandons al Qaeda, the ideology of the new entity is not expected to change. Golani fought with al Qaeda in Iraq. Some other leaders fought in Afghanistan and are close al Qaeda chief Ayman Zawahri.”

BBC News, March 6, 2015:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31764114>

- “Being a directly affiliated al-Qaeda group, the Nusra Front is nearer the IS end of the spectrum. Yet, while the Qatari relationship with the Nusra Front appears to be far from straightforward with some of the state’s initiatives failing, indicating some distance between the two, according to recent reports, Qatar appears to want to reform this relationship. This begs the question of why Qatar would want even loosely to associate itself with a group like the Nusra Front.”... “Secondly, the Nusra Front has pledged to concentrate its efforts on removing the Bashar al-Assad government, as opposed to attacking the “far enemy” (ie Western states).”... “This is why Qatar is hoping to bring the Nusra Front in from the cold.

If the state can get the group to eschew its al-Qaeda affiliation and adhere to a broadly moderate Islamist platform, Qatar can officially commence, with Western blessing, the supply of one of the most effective fighting forces in Syria.”... “But the fact remains that Qatar is a key Western ally. It hosts a critical US military base, it grafted US and UK higher-education institutions and ideas onto its education system, and has long promoted the Middle East’s most visible and powerful woman, Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser al-Missned, the Emir’s mother. These are transparently not the policies of a state with sympathies for the likes of IS or al-Qaeda. Indeed, there is no chance that Qatar is doing this alone: the US and UK governments will certainly be involved in or at least apprised of Qatar’s plans.”

Foreign Affairs (CFR), March 9, 2015:

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2015-03-09/accepting-al-qaeda>

- “Since 9/11, Washington has considered al Qaeda the greatest threat to the United States, one that must be eliminated regardless of cost or time. After Washington killed Osama bin Laden in 2011, it made Ayman al-Zawahiri, al Qaeda’s new leader, its next number one target. But the instability in the Middle East following the Arab revolutions and the meteoric rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) require that Washington rethink its policy toward al Qaeda, particularly its targeting of Zawahiri. Destabilizing al Qaeda at this time may in fact work against U.S. efforts to defeat

ISIS.”... “It is certainly ironic that at this point, when the United States is the closest it has ever been to destroying al Qaeda, its interests would be better served by keeping the terrorist organization afloat and Zawahiri alive.”

International Business Times, March 9, 2015:

<http://www.ibtimes.com/aleppo-battle-al-qaedas-jabhat-al-nusra-friend-syrian-rebel-groups-1841408>

- “Though JAN is al Qaeda’s only branch in Syria, the group often downplays its role in al Qaeda Central’s long-term plan to establish an Islamic “emirate” in favor of marketing itself as a Syria-centric opposition group focused on the revolution and overthrowing Assad. Their strategy relies on their ability to work alongside opposition groups of varying degrees of extremism when fighting the Islamic State group.”...

New York Times, March 14, 2015:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/15/world/asia/cia-funds-found-their-way-into-al-qaeda-coffers.html? _r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/15/world/asia/cia-funds-found-their-way-into-al-qaeda-coffers.html?_r=0)

- “They first turned to a secret fund that the Central Intelligence Agency bankrolled with monthly cash deliveries to the presidential palace in Kabul, according to several Afghan officials involved in the episode. The Afghan government, they said, had already squirreled away about \$1 million from that fund. Within weeks, that money and \$4 million more provided from other countries was handed over to Al Qaeda, replenishing its coffers after a relentless C.I.A. campaign of drone strikes in Pakistan had decimated the militant network’s upper ranks.”

Washington Post, March 17, 2015:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/pentagon-loses-sight-of-500-million-in-counterterrorism-aid-given-to-yemen/2015/03/17/f4ca25ce-cbf9-11e4-8a46-b1de9be5a8ff_story.html

- “The Pentagon is unable to account for more than \$500 million in U.S. military aid given to Yemen, amid fears that the weaponry, aircraft and equipment is at risk of being seized by Iranian-backed rebels or al-Qaeda, according to U.S. officials.”

RT, March 17, 2015: <http://www.rt.com/news/241573-isis-plane-drop-ammunition/>

- “The Islamic State is getting outside help, with plane drops providing ammunition for the terrorist organization, according to an RT Arabic report. Iraqi government soldiers also say this is a recurring theme and the group is as strong as ever.”

New York Times, March 18, 2015: [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/18/opinion/go-ahead-ruin-my-day.html? _r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/18/opinion/go-ahead-ruin-my-day.html?_r=0)

- “In 2002, we destroyed Iran’s main Sunni foe in Afghanistan (the Taliban regime). In 2003, we destroyed Iran’s main Sunni foe in the Arab world (Saddam Hussein). But because we failed to erect a self-sustaining pluralistic order, which could have been a durable counterbalance to Iran, we created a vacuum in both Iraq and the wider Sunni Arab world. That is why Tehran’s proxies now indirectly dominate four Arab capitals: Beirut, Damascus, Sana and Baghdad. ISIS, with all its awfulness, emerged as the homegrown Sunni Arab response to this crushing defeat of Sunni Arabism — mixing old pro-Saddam Baathists with medieval Sunni religious fanatics with a collection of ideologues, misfits and adventure-seekers from around the Sunni Muslim world. Obviously, I abhor ISIS and don’t want to see it spread or take over Iraq. I simply raise this question rhetorically because no one else is: Why is it in our interest to destroy the

last Sunni bulwark to a total Iranian takeover of Iraq? Because the Shiite militias now leading the fight against ISIS will rule better? Really?"

Al-Monitor, March 23, 2015: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/syria-christians-aleppo-regime-community-is.html#>

- "Five years into the Syrian conflict, Syria's Christians continue to fight for their existence, turning to the regime as a last resort."

Reuters, March 31, 2015: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/31/us-mideast-crisis-training-turkey-idUSKBN0MR0YR20150331>

- "A U.S.-led program to train Syrian rebels to fight Islamic State militants will start in May, Turkey's Defense Minister Ismet Yilmaz was quoted as saying by the state-run Anadolu news agency on Tuesday. U.S. officials have said they plan to train about 5,000 Syrian fighters a year for three years as part of a campaign against Islamic State forces in Iraq and Syria. Details on the training – due to take place in Turkey, Jordan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia – have been scant, although it had previously been planned to start this month."

Medium, March 31, 2015: <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/how-the-pentagon-lost-track-of-45-billion-5e2cc478240>

- "Since 2002, Congress has set aside \$104 billion specifically to rebuild Afghanistan. Of that, \$66 billion went to the Pentagon."... "Then the watchdog asked for the records—all the records—a second time. But the Pentagon didn't provide the information, and argued that pulling records for the unaccounted \$45 billion wasn't feasible."

New York Times, April 18, 2015:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/world/middleeast/sale-of-us-arms-fuels-the-wars-of-arab-states.html? _r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/world/middleeast/sale-of-us-arms-fuels-the-wars-of-arab-states.html?_r=0)

- "To wage war in Yemen, Saudi Arabia is using F-15 fighter jets bought from Boeing. Pilots from the United Arab Emirates are flying Lockheed Martin's F-16 to bomb both Yemen and Syria. Soon, the Emirates are expected to complete a deal with General Atomics for a fleet of Predator drones to run spying missions in their neighborhood."... "Last week, defense industry officials told Congress that they were expecting within days a request from Arab allies fighting the Islamic State — Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan and Egypt — to buy thousands of American-made missiles, bombs and other weapons, replenishing an arsenal that has been depleted over the past year."... "Saudi Arabia spent more than \$80 billion on weaponry last year — the most ever, and more than either France or Britain — and has become the world's fourth-largest defense market, according to figures released last week by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which tracks global military spending."

The Emirates spent nearly \$23 billion last year, more than three times what they spent in 2006. Qatar, another gulf country with bulging coffers and a desire to assert its influence around the Middle East, is on a shopping spree. Last year, Qatar signed an \$11 billion deal with the Pentagon to purchase Apache attack helicopters and Patriot and Javelin air-defense systems. Now the tiny nation is hoping to make a large purchase of Boeing F-15 fighters to replace its aging fleet of French Mirage jets. Qatari officials are expected to

present the Obama administration with a wish list of advanced weapons before they come to Washington next month for meetings with other gulf nations.

American defense firms are following the money. Boeing opened an office in Doha, Qatar, in 2011, and Lockheed Martin set up an office there this year. Lockheed created a division in 2013 devoted solely to foreign military sales, and the company's chief executive, Marillyn Hewson, has said that Lockheed needs to increase foreign business — with a goal of global arms sales' becoming 25 percent to 30 percent of its revenue — in part to offset the shrinking of the Pentagon budget after the post-Sept. 11 boom."

The Intercept, May 9, 2015:

<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/05/09/military-contractors-form-group-pressure-2016-candidates-adopt-hawkish-positions>

- "Former House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers has formed a new pressure group, now active in Iowa and New Hampshire, to serve as the "premiere national security and foreign policy organization during the 2016 debate" and to "help elect a president who supports American engagement and a strong foreign policy." Roger's group, Americans for Peace, Prosperity, and Security, is hosting candidate events and intends to host a candidate forum later this year. The organization does not disclose its donors. But a look at the business executives helping APPS steer presidential candidates towards more hawkish positions reveals that many are defense contractors who stand to gain financially from continued militarism"

Foreign Policy In Focus, May 13, 2015:

<http://fpif.org/dcs-dictator-summit/>

- "On May 13th and 14th, President Obama is hosting a billionaire conglomerate known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which consists of the Middle Eastern monarchies of Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, and Oman. The cozy U.S.-GCC relationship exemplifies the twisted nature of U.S. foreign policy, especially in regards to one particular monarchy: Saudi Arabia."

National Journal, May 14, 2015:

<http://www.nationaljournal.com/white-house/obama-commits-u-s-to-defend-gulf-arab-allies-territory-20150514>

- "Obama laid out five points of agreement among all the countries, top among them a commitment by the United States to respond to an "external threat" to any of the nations' territorial integrity, which could include the use of military force, as well as the development of a ballistic-missile defense for the Gulf nations. "And let me underscore, the United States keeps our commitments," Obama said."

BBC News, May 15, 2015:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27801676>

- "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the head of the Islamic State (IS) militant group, has been careful to reveal little about himself and his whereabouts."... Reports suggest he was a cleric in a mosque in the city around the time of the US-led invasion in 2003. Some believe he was already a militant jihadist during the rule of Saddam Hussein. Others suggest he was radicalised during the four years he was held at Camp Bucca, a US facility in southern Iraq where many al-Qaeda commanders were detained. He emerged as the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, one of the groups that later became Islamic State of Iraq and

the Levant (ISIS), in 2010, and rose to prominence during the attempted merger with al-Nusra Front in Syria”

The Daily Caller, May 28, 2015:

<http://dailycaller.com/2015/05/28/us-trained-foreign-special-forces-commander-defects-to-isis/>

- “US-Trained Foreign Special Forces Commander Defects To ISIS.”... He claims he received training from Russian and American special forces in Moscow and in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He also boasts about training by the U.S. private military contractor Blackwater.”

Foreign Policy, May 20, 2015:

https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/20/top-u-s-general-many-iraqis-believe-washington-aiding-islamic-state/?utm_content=buffera0e4a&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

- “The general in charge of U.S. special operations forces in Iraq for the past six months says Washington’s information campaign in the Middle East is so inadequate that many Iraqi troops believe American forces are secretly supplying the Islamic State — potentially leaving U.S. forces vulnerable to reprisal attacks from their nominal allies in the fight against the militants.”... “As an example, he cited a narrative that had taken root in Iraq that the United States was “resupplying” the forces of the Islamic State, which has swept across northern Syria and Iraq over the past 18 months, seizing the important Iraqi city of Ramadi in Anbar province this past week. Crytzer did not specify why many Iraqis would believe that U.S. forces would support an extremist organization that has routinely conducted barbaric executions of its hostages from the United States other Western nations.”

The Intercept, May 28, 2015:

<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/05/28/called-khorasan-group-doesnt-exist/>

- “In early September 2014, an Associated Press story quoted unnamed U.S. officials discussing an imminent threat from a previously unknown, Syria-based terror outfit called the “Khorasan Group.” U.S. officials told the AP that the jihadist group was stocked with al Qaeda veterans and was plotting imminent attacks against U.S.-bound airline flights. Officials also suggested that the level of danger posed by the group exceeded that of ISIS, the militant group which now controls much of Iraq and Syria.”... “Yesterday, the head of al Qaeda’s affiliate in Syria gave the clearest indication yet that the group is a fabrication. In an interview conducted with Al Jazeera Arabic, Abu Muhammad al Jolani, the head of Jabhat al Nusra, said the following: *“The so-called Khorasan group, supposedly active within our ranks, doesn’t exist. We first heard about it via the media after the U.S.-led coalition bombed us. It is merely a Western invention to justify the bombings on us. There are some brothers from Khorasan who joined our strife though.”*

Reuters, June 2, 2015:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/02/van-buren-iraq-idUSL1N0YO25X20150602>

- “Iraqi security forces lost 2,300 Humvee armored vehicles when Islamic State overran the northern city of Mosul in June 2014, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said on Sunday in an interview with Iraqiya state television. Coupled with previous losses of American weapons, the conclusion is simple: The United States is effectively supplying Islamic

State with tools of war the militant group cannot otherwise hope to acquire from its patrons.”... “In addition, some \$1.2 billion in training funds for Iraq were tucked into an omnibus spending bill that Congress passed earlier this year. This is in spite of the sad reality that from 2003 to 2011, the United States spent \$25 billion training Iraqi security forces.”

The Guardian, June 3, 2015:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/03/us-isis-syria-iraq>

- “Reports were cited that MI6 had cooperated with the CIA on a “rat line” of arms transfers from Libyan stockpiles to the Syrian rebels in 2012 after the fall of the Gaddafi regime.”... “A revealing light on how we got here has now been shone by a recently declassified secret US intelligence report, written in August 2012, which uncannily predicts – and effectively welcomes – the prospect of a “Salafist principality” in eastern Syria and an al-Qaida-controlled Islamic state in Syria and Iraq.

In stark contrast to western claims at the time, the Defense Intelligence Agency document identifies al-Qaida in Iraq (which became Isis) and fellow Salafists as the “major forces driving the insurgency in Syria” – and states that “western countries, the Gulf states and Turkey” were supporting the opposition’s efforts to take control of eastern Syria. Raising the “possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist principality”, the Pentagon report goes on, “this is exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime, which is considered the strategic depth of the Shia expansion (Iraq and Iran)”.”... “That doesn’t mean the US created Isis, of course, though some of its Gulf allies certainly played a role in it – as the US vice-president, Joe Biden, acknowledged last year. But there was no al-Qaida in Iraq until the US and Britain invaded. And the US has certainly exploited the existence of Isis against other forces in the region as part of a wider drive to maintain western control.”

Reuters, June 22, 2015:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/22/us-mideast-crisis-syria-usa-idUSKBN0P22BX20150622>

- “Syrian rebels receiving U.S. military training to battle Islamic State militants are being paid \$250 to \$400 per month, depending on their skills, performance and leadership position, the Pentagon said on Monday.”

Brookings Institute, June 23, 2015:

<http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2015/06/23-syria-strategy-ohanlon/23syriastrategyohanlon.pdf>

- “Training opposition fighters in the safety of Turkey, Jordan, and other friendly countries would still be the first step. But it would not over time be sufficient, either, since many opposition fighters are reluctant to leave their home territories and thereby leave their families and communities unprotected in order to go abroad for training. The idea would be to help moderate elements establish reliable safe zones within Syria once they were able. American, as well as Saudi and Turkish and British and Jordanian and other Arab forces would act in support, not only from the air but eventually on the ground via the presence of special forces as well.”... “This type of plan may be the only realistic path forward... Moreover, while it is not without risks for the United States, the scale of military involvement envisioned is not substantially greater than what we have been doing the last year or so in Afghanistan. President Obama.... should not view Syria

as a problem to hand to his successor, but rather a crisis that demands his attention and a new strategy now.”

Wall Street Journal, June 25, 2015:

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/to-many-iraqis-u-s-is-not-really-seeking-to-defeat-islamic-state-1435224647>

- ““We all know that America is providing ISIS with weapons and food, and that it is because of American backing that they have become so strong,” added Abbas Hashem, a 50-year-old who also escaped from Ramadi and now lives in the makeshift Baghdad camp that is only occasionally supplied with water. Such conspiracy theories about America’s support for Islamic State are outlandish, no doubt. But they are so widespread that they now represent a political reality with real-world consequences—making it harder for the U.S. and allies to cobble together Iraqi forces that could regain the country’s Sunni heartland from Islamic State’s murderous rule one day.”...

“This spreading perception that the U.S. isn’t really interested in defeating Islamic State has undermined local resistance to the militant group in Anbar in recent months. It represents a major obstacle to recruiting local Sunni tribes—one of the U.S. strategies in the war—provincial leaders say.”... “We don’t have any trust in Americans anymore,” said Alia Nusseif, a prominent Shiite lawmaker from Baghdad. “We now think ISIS is being used as a tool by America to divide and weaken Iraq.”

The Times of Israel, June 29, 2015:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/yaalon-syrian-rebels-keeping-druze-safe-in-exchange-for-israeli-aid/>

- “Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon said Monday that Israel has been providing aid to Syrian rebels, thus keeping the Druze in Syria out of immediate danger.”... “We’ve assisted them under two conditions,” Ya’alon said of the Israeli medical aid to the Syrian rebels, some of whom are presumably fighting with al-Qaeda affiliate al-Nusra Front to topple Syrian President Bashar Assad.”

Al-Monitor, July 1, 2015:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/07/israel-syria-war-bashar-al-assad-support-rebels-al-qaeda-is.html#>

- “In contrast, it is a dangerous, irresponsible gamble to choose Assad’s enemies and encourage his collapse — it would be playing with fire. The prominent elements among Israel’s potential future neighbors are mainly Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaeda’s branch in Syria, or the Islamic State, whose fighters aim to advance to southern Syria but have been blocked so far.”

The Intercept, July 15, 2015:

<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/07/15/israeli-special-forces-assassinated-senior-syrian-official/>

- “On Aug. 1, 2008, a small team of Israeli commandos entered the waters near Tartus, Syria, and shot and killed a Syrian general as he was holding a dinner party at his seaside weekend home. Muhammad Suleiman, a top aide to the Syrian president, was shot in the head and neck, and the Israeli military team escaped by sea. While Israel has never spoken about its involvement, secret U.S. intelligence files confirm that Israeli special operations forces assassinated the general while he vacationed at his luxury villa on the Syrian coast.”

Al-Jazeera, July 16, 2015:

<http://pr.aljazeera.com/post/124230887340/drones-cause-more-damage-than-good-al-jazeera>

- “President Obama’s former top military intelligence official has launched a scathing attack on the White House’s counter-terrorism strategy, including the administration’s handling of the ISIL threat in Iraq and Syria and the US military’s drone war. In a forthcoming interview with Al Jazeera English’s ‘Head to Head’, retired US Lt. General Michael Flynn, who quit as head of the Pentagon’s Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in August 2014, said “there should be a different approach, absolutely” on drones. “When you drop a bomb from a drone... you are going to cause more damage than you are going to cause good.” Flynn was a senior intelligence officer with the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), which is responsible for the US military’s secretive and controversial drone program in countries such as Yemen and Somalia. Asked by Al Jazeera English’s Mehdi Hasan if drone strikes tend to create more terrorists than they kill, Flynn – who has been described by Wired magazine as “the real father of the modern JSOC” – replied: “I don’t disagree with that”, adding: “I think as an overarching strategy, it’s a failed strategy.”

The Telegraph, July 21, 2015:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/saudiarabia/11753809/British-troops-head-to-Saudi-Arabia-to-train-Syrian-rebels.html>

- “British troops are being sent to Saudi Arabia to begin training Syrian rebels, as the UK widens its efforts to combat Islamic State extremists. Troops will soon be deployed to a desert base in the north of the country to teach rebel volunteers basic infantry skills as part of a US-led training programme. The mission will mean Britain is training Syrian moderate rebel fighters in four countries, including Turkey, Qatar and Jordan.”

New York Times, July 30, 2015:

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/31/world/middleeast/us-trained-islamic-state-opponents-reported-kidnapped-in-syria.html?_r=0 –

“A Pentagon program to train moderate Syrian insurgents to fight the Islamic State has been vexed by problems of recruitment, screening, dismissals and desertions that have left only a tiny band of fighters ready to do battle. Those fighters — 54 in all — suffered perhaps their most embarrassing setback yet on Thursday. One of their leaders, a Syrian Army defector who recruited them, was abducted in Syria near the Turkish border, along with his deputy who commands the trainees. They were seized not by the Islamic State but by its rival the Nusra Front, an affiliate of Al Qaeda that is another Islamist extremist byproduct of the four-year-old Syrian civil war.”... “The Nusra Front dealt a more serious blow to the C.I.A. program last year, attacking and dismantling its main groups, the Syrian Revolutionaries Front and Harakat Hazm, and seizing some of their American-supplied, sophisticated antitank missiles.”

Sunday Express, August 1, 2015:

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/595439/SAS-ISIS-fighter-Jihadis>

- “The unorthodox tactic, which is seeing SAS units dressed in black and flying ISIS flags, has been likened to the methods used by the Long Range Desert Group against Rommel’s forces during the Second World War.”... “Last week an additional 20 SAS soldiers flew into Saudi Arabia to prepare a training system in which the UK will instruct

hundreds of members of the Syrian Moderate Opposition, as part of efforts by David Cameron to seek a support by Labour and the SNP on air strikes over Syria.”

The Independent, August 4, 2015:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/us-led-airstrikes-in-syria-only-two-civilian-deaths-have-been-officially-recognised-that-would-be-extraordinary-if-it-were-true-10438013.html>

- “The first year of the international Coalition’s air war against Isis has already seen more than 17,000 bombs and missiles dropped on Iraq and Syria, as part of 5,700 air strikes.”... “Yet in more than 50 cases we felt there was enough evidence – often including photographs, eyewitness testimony and the names of victims – to strongly indicate civilians had been killed by the coalition. It’s likely that between 459 and 591 non-combatants died in these attacks, including 100 children.”

Defense One, August 5, 2015:

<http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/industry/2015/08/05/report-defense-firms-ramp-up-spending-lobbying/31165301/>

- “The defense industry is stepping up its lobbying efforts in Washington in an attempt to get Congress to increase defense spending, according to a report published Wednesday. The top 50-plus defense contractors spent \$58.5 million combined on lobbying in 2015’s second quarter, according to an analysis by the Center for Public Integrity produced in conjunction with Time. This represented a 28 percent increase from the \$45.7 million the 53 contractors spent during the same quarter in 2014.”

RT, August 5, 2015:

<https://www.rt.com/usa/311601-us-defensive-airstrikes-syria/>

- “The US has been carrying out airstrikes against ISIS in Syria for almost a year, and the latest decision to bomb Syrian government forces in order to “protect” US-trained “moderate rebels” does not require any additional legal justification, the State Department believes.”... “I frankly don’t know what the legal authority is,” Toner said, adding that the situation in Syria remains “complex and fluid.”

The Guardian, August 5, 2015:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/05/us-drone-bombs-islamic-state-target-syria-turkey>

- “A US armed drone has bombed a target in Islamic State-controlled northern Syria, in the first such air strike by a US aircraft after taking off from Turkish territory, a Turkish official told AFP.”... “Last month Ankara said it would allow US warplanes to launch attacks from the Incirlik airbase in southern Turkey, which is just 200 km (125 miles) from Isis positions in northern Syria.”

CBS News, August 6, 2015:

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/pentagons-early-training-of-syrian-rebels-seen-as-failure/>

- “But what appeared to be a victory turned into defeat when the rest of the NSF scattered. Some were captured by al Nusra. Some made it back to Turkey. Others are simply missing. Despite the bad start, the Pentagon insisted it remains committed to the training program, which is a linchpin of a strategy that depends on local ground forces taking advantage of American air strikes to recapture territory seized by ISIS. Hundreds more fighters are currently in training or waiting to start. So far the Pentagon has spent \$42

million setting up the program and plans to spend a total of \$500 million to train and equip 12,000 fighters.”

The Telegraph, August 10, 2015:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11794315/Al-Qaeda-in-Syria-says-withdrawing-from-frontline-areas-with-IS.html> -

“Al Qaeda’s affiliate in Syria has declared it will withdraw from frontlines where it has been fighting against Islamic State because it does not want to cooperate with the US-led coalition.”...” Despite sharing their origins in al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra and Isil have battled each other since a rancorous split in 2013.”...” Although it is thought to have received military and financial support from other members of the US-led coalition such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Jabhat al-Nusra has nevertheless repeatedly scuttled plans for Western support, branding Western-backed rebel factions as “collaborators.”

The Times of Israel, August 16, 2015:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/al-nusra-front-frees-7-us-backed-rebels-in-syria/>

- “Al-Qaeda’s affiliate in Syria has released seven members of a US-backed rebel faction that it abducted late last month, the rebel group said in a statement. The Division 30 rebel group said in a statement late Saturday that it hopes the Nusra Front will release the group’s commander, who has been held since July 30. Days after the abduction, the Nusra Front attacked the Division 30 command in northern Syria, leading to the near-collapse of the group, which has dozens of fighters.”... “The Division 30 statement described Nusra Front fighters as “brothers” and thanked them for the release, saying, “We value this noble step.” It said Division 30 is on the “same page with all holy warriors in Syria.”

The Independent, August 17, 2015:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-on-verge-of-sending-troops-into-syria-over-increased-threat-of-terrorist-attack-10458533.html>

- “The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) is believed to be preparing for a possible ground operation in Syria. Local news channel, Channel 2, reported a large scale drill by military forces along the border on Sunday which simulated a possible incursion into Syrian territory and the evacuation of Israeli citizens from nearby border towns.”

Free Beacon, August 18, 2015:

<http://freebeacon.com/national-security/u-s-trained-syrian-insurgent-plans-to-fight-assad-citing-pentagon-training-program/>

- “A Syrian rebel trained by the Pentagon to fight the Islamic State plans to fight forces aligned with Bashar al-Assad’s regime. In an exclusive interview with CNN conducted via Skype from Syria, Abu Iskander cited the U.S. training program when justifying whether or not the pro-U.S. Syrian rebels should engage Assad’s forces.”

Huffington Post, August 19, 2015:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/harut-sassounian/turkeys-pays-former-cia-d-b_8002534.html

- “The Wall Street Journal reported on August 12 that a senior US military official accused Turkey of deceiving the American government by allowing its use of Incirlik airbase to attack ISIS, as a cover for President Erdogan’s war on Kurdish fighters (PKK) in northern Iraq. So far, Turkey has carried out 300 air strikes against the PKK, and only three against ISIS!”... “To conceal its deception and mislead the American public, within days of starting its war on the Kurds, Ankara hired Squire Patton Boggs for \$32,000 a

month, as a subcontractor to the powerful lobbying firm, the Gephardt Group. Squire Patton Boggs includes former Senators Trent Lott and John Breaux, and retired White House official Robert Kapla.

The Gephardt lobbying team for Turkey consists of subcontractors Greenberg Traurig, Brian Forni, Lydia Borland, and Dickstein Shapiro LLP; the latter recently added to its lobbying staff former CIA Director Porter Goss. Other lobbying firms hired by Turkey are: Goldin Solutions, Alpaytac, Finn Partners, Ferah Ozbek, and Golin/Harris International. According to U.S. Justice Department records, Turkey pays these lobbying/public relations firms around \$5 million a year. Furthermore, several U.S. non-profit organizations serve as fronts for the Turkish government to promote its interests in the United States and take Members of Congress and journalists on all-expense paid junkets to Turkey. Among the U.S. lobbyists for Turkey, perhaps the most questionable is Porter Goss, CIA Director from 2004 to 2006, who has agreed to sell his soul and possibly U.S. national secrets for a fistful of Turkish Liras."

NBC News, August 20, 2015:

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/israel-launches-strikes-syria-after-rocket-attack-n413446>

- "Four rockets were fired into Israel from Syria Thursday and the Israeli government accused an Iranian-backed group as being responsible. No injuries were reported in the 5:35 p.m. local time (10:35 a.m. ET) rocket attack in the Upper Galilee and Golan Heights, and the Israeli military responded by launching airstrikes and artillery attacks against 14 targets in the Syrian Golan Heights."

The Guardian, August 20, 2015:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/20/israel-hit-rockets-syria-confusion-blame>

- "Israeli defence sources initially blame Palestinian Islamic Jihad, before switching to Iran's Quds Force, then blaming Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad"

The Daily Star, August 21, 2015:

<http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Aug-21/312109-second-group-of-us-trained-syrian-rebels-could-be-deployed-within-weeks-source.ashx>

- "A second group of rebel fighters trained in Turkey by the U.S.-led coalition could be deployed to Syria within weeks as part of a campaign to push ISIS insurgents away from the border, diplomatic sources told Reuters Friday."

Defense News, August 21, 2015:

<http://www.defensenews.com/story/military/2015/08/21/isis-used-mustard-gas-makhmour-against-kurds/32116637/>

- "U.S. military officials in Iraq have issued preliminary confirmation that Islamic State militants used mustard gas in a mortar attack on Kurdish forces in August, a Defense Department official said."

FARS News, August 22, 2015:

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13940531000300>

- "The Syrian air defense system shot down an Israeli warplane violating the Arab country's air space."

Reuters, August 22, 2015:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/08/22/us-israel-iran-idUSKCN0QR0KR20150822>

- “Israel’s political leaders pushed to attack Iran at least three times in the past few years but had to back down on the advice of the military and due to concerns about its ally the United States, former defense minister Ehud Barak said.”

The Jerusalem Post, August 24, 2015:

<http://www.jpost.com/Business-and-Innovation/Israel-importing-77-percent-of-its-oil-from-Iraqi-Kurdistan-report-says-413056> -

“Israel may be importing some NIS 3.84 billion-worth of oil from the semi-autonomous northern Iraqi region of Kurdistan, a move that could have geopolitical and economic ramifications for both parties. On Sunday night, The Financial Times reported that Israel had imported as much as 77 percent of its oil supply from Kurdistan in recent months, bringing in some 19 million barrels between the beginning of May and August 11. During that period, more than a third of all northern Iraqi exports, shipped through Turkey’s Ceyhan port, went to Israel, with transactions amounting to almost \$1b., the report said, citing “shipping data, trading sources and satellite tanker tracking.”

McClatchy, August 24, 2015:

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/middle-east/article32206167.html>

- “The kidnapping of a group of U.S.-trained moderate Syrians moments after they entered Syria last month to confront the Islamic State was orchestrated by Turkish intelligence, multiple rebel sources have told McClatchy. The rebels say that the tipoff to al Qaida’s Nusra Front enabled Nusra to snatch many of the 54 graduates of the \$500 million program on July 29 as soon as they entered Syria, dealing a humiliating blow to the Obama administration’s plans for confronting the Islamic State.

The Daily Star, August 24, 2015: <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Aug-24/312519-us-turkey-to-launch-comprehensive-anti-isis-operation.ashx> – “Turkey and the United States will soon launch “comprehensive” air operations to flush ISIS fighters from a zone in northern Syria bordering Turkey, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told Reuters Monday. Detailed talks between Washington and Ankara on the plans were completed on Sunday, and regional allies including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan, as well as Britain and France may also take part, Cavusoglu said in an interview.”

New York Times, August 25, 2015:

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/26/world/middleeast/pentagon-investigates-allegations-of-skewed-intelligence-reports-on-isis.html?_r=1

- “The Pentagon’s inspector general is investigating allegations that military officials have skewed intelligence assessments about the United States-led campaign in Iraq against the Islamic State to provide a more optimistic account of progress, according to several officials familiar with the inquiry.

The Nation, August 25, 2015:

<http://www.thenation.com/article/the-civilian-toll-from-the-war-against-isis-is-huge-why-isnt-the-press-covering-it/>

- “As of this month, the US-led coalition has been bombing Islamic State targets in Iraq and Syria for one year. So far, it has carried out over 5,900 strikes. In that time, the Pentagon has admitted to only two civilian deaths, continually insisting that its precision weapons have minimized civilian fatalities to a remarkable level—too remarkable to be believed. In June, Lt. Gen. John Hesterman, former combined forces air component commander, called the current air war against ISIS “the most precise and disciplined in

the history of aerial warfare.” However, in a report published this month, a monitoring group called Airwars has documented at least 459 civilian deaths that it says were likely the result of the coalition bombing campaign—a far cry from the two deaths that have so far been admitted.”

Al-Jazeera, August 25, 2015:

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/8/25/defense-department-manual-allows-for-journalists-detention.html>

- “New Defense Department guidelines allow commanders to punish journalists and treat them as “unprivileged belligerents” if they believe journalists are sympathizing or cooperating with the enemy.”... “A person deemed to be an “unprivileged belligerent” is not entitled to the rights afforded by the Geneva Convention. A commander could restrict from certain coverage areas or even hold indefinitely without charges any reporter considered an “unprivileged belligerent.”

The Independent, August 25, 2015:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-executions-amnesty-international-beheadings-death-sentences-rate-under-king-salman-10470456.html>

- “Saudi Arabia has executed at least 175 people in the past year, at a rate of one every two days, according to a report by Amnesty International. The kingdom killed 102 convicted criminals in the first six months of 2015 alone, putting it on course to beat its 1995 record number for the calendar year of 192. Those killed included children under the age of 18 at the time of the offence, and disabled people.”... “Amnesty said that Saudi Arabia carried out most of its executions in the period by beheading, although some were killed by firing squad.”

Longer/More In Depth Articles-Documents:

<https://medium.com/insurge-intelligence/secret-pentagon-report-reveals-west-saw-isis-as-strategic-asset-b99ad7a29092>

Pentagon report predicted West’s support for Islamist rebels would create ISIS

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v35/n24/seymour-m-hersh/whose-sarin>

An Article by Seymour Hersh, titled “Whose sarin?”

http://coat.ncf.ca/our_magazine/links/issue51/articles/51_12-13.pdf

Journal Article by Douglas Little, professor of history at Clark University, titled “Syria: Early Experiments in Covert Action”

<https://medium.com/insurge-intelligence/how-the-west-created-the-islamic-state-dbfaf83bc1f>

How the west created the Islamic State

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n08/seymour-m-hersh/the-red-line-and-the-rat-line>

An article by Seymour Hersh, titled “The Red Line and the Rat Line”

<http://www.mintpressnews.com/4-million-muslims-killed-in-western-wars-should-we-call-it-genocide/208711/>

4 Million Muslims Killed In Western Wars: Should We Call It Genocide?

http://web.archive.org/web/20120308220520/http://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/1671459_insight-military-intervention-in-syria-post-withdrawal.html

Wikileaks cables show military intervention in Syria”, US training “rebels” since 2011 and the complete grand plan

<http://www.washingtonsblog.com/2012/09/sleeping-with-the-devil-how-u-s-and-saudi-backing-of-al-qaeda-led-to-911.html>

Sleeping With the Devil: How U.S. and Saudi Backing of Al Qaeda Led to 9/11

<http://digwithin.net/2015/07/31/understanding-oil-qaeda/>

Understanding Oil Qaeda

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/03/05/the-redirection>

A highly important article written (in 2007) by Seymour Hersh, titled “The Redirection”.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20030402124132/http://www.sundayherald.com/28224>

The West’s battle for oil

<http://www.judicialwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Pg.-291-Pgs.-287-293-JW-v-DOD-and-State-14-812-DOD-Release-2015-04-10-final-version11.pdf>

2012 Defense Intelligence Agency document: West will facilitate rise of Islamic State “in order to isolate the Syrian regime”

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2009/6/iran%20strategy/06_iran_strategy.pdf

Which Path to Persia?

<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/10/building-syrian-opposition-army-pollack/building-a-better-syrian-armyweb.pdf>

Building a Better Syrian Opposition Army: How and Why

http://www.princeton.edu/~jns/publications/Sinjar_2_July_23.pdf

Bombers, Bank Accounts and Bleedout

<http://www.meforum.org/5317/turkey-isis>

Turkey’s Double Game with ISIS

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/07/28/the-syrian-bet>

An article by Seymour Hersh, titled “The Syrian Bet”

<http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2007/03/whitehouse200703?printable=true&curre>

From the Wonderful Folks Who Brought You Iraq

<https://medium.com/insurge-intelligence/ex-intel-officials-pentagon-report-proves-us-complicity-in-isis-fabef96e20da>

Ex-intel officials: Pentagon report proves US complicity in ISIS

<http://jah.oxfordjournals.org/content/99/1/24.full>

Oil and the American Century

<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/The%20Zionist%20Plan%20for%20the%20Middle%20East.pdf>

The Zionist Plan for the Middle East/Yinon Plan

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/greater-israel-the-zionist-plan-for-the-middle-east/5324815>

“Greater Israel”: The Zionist Plan for the Middle East

<https://web.archive.org/web/20131231013203/http://www.iasps.org/strat1.htm>

A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm

http://www.irmep.org/PDF/3-27-2003_Clean_Break_or_Dirty_War.pdf

A Clean Break or Dirty War? Israel's Foreign Policy Directive to the United States

<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>

Rebuilding America's Defenses (Project for the New American Century)

<http://newint.org/features/2009/10/01/blowback-extended-version/>

Our Terrorists

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-l-phillips/research-paper-isis-turke_b_6128950.html

Research Paper: ISIS-Turkey List

<https://kanaanonline.org//articles/00361.pdf>

Britain and the Rise of Wahhabism and the House of Saud

<http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-magazine-monitor-30796539>

Shakespear of Arabia

http://www.jstor.org/stable/164184?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Reviewed Work: Arabia's Frontiers: The Story of Britain's Boundary Drawing in the Desert

<http://www.reuters.com/investigates/pentagon/#article/part1>

Unaccountable: The high cost of the Pentagon's bad bookkeeping

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/177

Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 20 November 2014 to 3 March 2015

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2190250-airwars-cause-for-concern-civilians-killed-by.html>

Cause for Concern: Documents Civilian Airstrikes

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Aramco#History

Saudi Aramco

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_John_Philby

St. John Philby

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percy_Cox

Percy Cox

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trucial_States

Trucial States

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Jeddah_%281927%29

Treaty of Jeddah

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Darin

Treaty of Darin

<http://www.rt.com/op-edge/240365-lebanon-revolution-anniversary-cedar-2005/>

Ten years on, Lebanon's 'Cedar Revolution'

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/lebanons-future-is-on-the-line-and-it-directly-affects-syria/5471521>

Lebanon's Future Is on the Line, and It Directly Affects Syria

http://www.carlbernstein.com/magazine_cia_and_media.php

The CIA and the Media

Videos of Interest:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgBsTT0h_SA

A discussion between Jeffrey Goldberg and the former Israeli Ambassador to the US, Michael Oren. At the beginning of the conversation Michael Oren argues that the Sunnis are the "lesser of the evils" between Sunnis and Shias. He then goes on to argue that the Shias are killing a lot more people than Sunnis, predominantly through Iranian proxies.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeyRwFHR8WY>

Roland Dumas (former French politician) states that the British prepared for war in Syria 2 years before the eruption of the crisis

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8kKCCnOm1Y

Retired General McInerney Says U.S. Helped Build ISIS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dqn0bm4E9yw>

Hillary Clinton: We created Al-Qaeda

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMjXbuJ7BPI>

The Covert Origins of ISIS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ek7ZHenQnu4>

Al Qaeda Doesn't Exist, Part 1

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnV_pNe_BB0

Al Qaeda Doesn't Exist, Part 2

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6kdi1UXxhY&oref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3Do6kdi1UXxhY&has_verified=1

Origins of ISIS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCBhyzRELLw>

What The Media Isn't Telling You About Syria

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHLqaSZPe98>

Wesley Clark: "Our friends and allies funded ISIS to destroy Hezbollah"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=675&v=SG3j8OYKgn4>

Mehdi Hasan goes Head to Head with Michael T Flynn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eo2GYQxopbM>

New Evidence US Backed ISIS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RC1Mepk_Sw

General Wesley Clark: Wars Were Planned – Seven Countries In Five Years

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=33&v=nA39jVSo7XE>

Dempsey: I know of Arab allies who fund ISIS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUjHb4C7b94>

The Islamic State (Full Length)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NND2kacY2TY>

The Origins Of The Rise Of ISIS Lie In US Arming The FSA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G4Kpm-yHCzw>

Saudi royal family corruption, Part 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7-A-ImHhjA>

Saudi royal family corruption, Part 2

<http://www.memri.org/clip/en/3875.htm>

FSA General Gives Int'l Community One Month to Provide Anti-Tank, Anti-Aircraft Weapons

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8NlFaHvPHQ>

CIA Funds and Manipulates US news media – Operation mockingbird

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sSDUN-esUI>

Project for the New American Century

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2WrwUM2RwI>

US Intelligence Confirms US Support for ISIS

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